

**Mirrors and Windows: a case study of the effectiveness of teaching strategies  
employed in racially diverse classrooms at one primary school in the Gauteng  
Province in South Africa**

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**By**

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## DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

Student Number: 49207733

I declare that “**Mirrors and Windows: a case study of the effectiveness of teaching strategies employed in racially diverse classrooms at one primary school in the Gauteng Province in South Africa**” is my own work and all sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.



26 July 2019

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SIGNATURE

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DATE

Mrs MS Nenweli

## **ABSTRACT**

This study used Bhaskar's Critical Realist ontology as meta-theory reinforced by Margaret Archer's Social Realist Theory as an analytical framework to help obtain a deeper understanding of the contributory mechanisms to the provision of equal opportunities to learn in racially diverse South African classrooms in a chosen primary school in Pretoria, South Africa. The study applied Archer's Morphogenesis/Morphostasis analytical framework in an attempt to understand whether or not the school has transformed or reproduced the status quo on opportunities to learning after democracy. In particular, the study focused on the provision of equal opportunities to learn irrespective of their racial or cultural backgrounds. Archer's analytical dualism was used to scrutinise the interaction between 'parts' (structure and culture) and the 'people' (agency). Thus, the focus was to uncover the fundamental factors that enable and constrain the provision of equal opportunities to learn in a class with racially diverse learners. This entailed the separation of structures (policies, systems, and the school governance structures), cultures (beliefs and values and how do they affect teaching and learning) and agents (people such as teachers, learners, school principals, amongst others and their ability to act (agency) within and upon their own world with regard to their social roles and positions to stimulate their emergent properties and powers.

In this study, I explored how the emergent properties and powers contained in the learning resource material, policies, and ideational and agential components assisted in the production of certain actions and practices in relation to teaching and learning in a racially diverse environment. I examined these generative mechanisms to identify whether they enabled or constrained the provision of equal opportunities to learn within a racially diverse classroom context. Qualitative research methodologies were applied through the use of semi-structured interviews, classroom observations and document analysis as data collection methods.

At the domain of structure, the findings of the study revealed that the notion of ensuring that all learners have access to basic education without discrimination of any kind was a critical mechanism that provided learners from racially diverse contexts with physical access. Arabia (pseudonym) Primary School had enough classrooms and teaching and learning materials to

cater for all learners. The South African Schools Act<sup>1</sup> (SASA) (1996) and the admission policy of the school were found to be enabling factors in terms of admission of racially diverse learners into the school as there is no encouragement of discrimination of any kind. The school's religious policy was also found to cater for the learners' diverse religions, however, it is silent about learners who are not religious.

The study found that there was a mismatch between the staff complement and learner enrolment as teachers were predominantly White while learners were mainly Black Africans. Ideally, it will be better for the school to strive towards a racially diverse teaching staff complement to match the racially diverse learners. The current situation may have implications for the provision of equal opportunities to learn. The study also realised that, since there was evidence of racial and cultural incongruity between learners and teachers, it might take time for the school to match the now racially diverse learner enrolment with a racially diverse staff complement. This may require transforming the staff complement through the employment of teachers who can speak different African languages and can accommodate and represent diverse cultures in teaching and learning.

A constraining mechanism to the provision of equal opportunities to learn was the time assigned to some of the lessons. In some instances, it was found that lessons scheduled for thirty minutes were limited in terms of teaching and learning activities possible in this time frame, thereby hampering the provision of equal opportunities to learn.

Within the domain of culture, an important mechanism that was identified was the discourse of the language of learning and teaching (LOLT). The LOLT, specifically English, was found constraining to the provision of equal opportunities to learn to learners of African descent. Learners whose home language was English benefited more in terms of knowledge and understanding of lessons compared to the majority of black African learners who spoke indigenous languages. This points to the need to review the language policy of the school in order to accommodate the local indigenous African languages. However, this may be a complex exercise considering that the black African learners speak different indigenous languages.

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<sup>1</sup>An act is passed by parliament and it carries more legal weight and it is not something that can easily change, whilst a policy can be a decision of a Manager or a department and this can easily be changed.

In the domain of agency, the study found that the Head of Department (HoD) possessed the authority to guide teachers regarding the Learning Areas that they teach, the approaches to teaching and learning, as well as the learning activities that they have to carry out. This meant that they provided curriculum leadership, thus they could exercise more agency in this regard. Data also revealed that, although the curriculum was found to be relevant to racially diverse classes, teachers were unable to integrate racial diversity to the topics covered in the prescribed textbooks, particularly those that were largely based on western knowledge. This implied that teachers who participated in the study were not prepared for racially diverse classes. It will be necessary to integrate learners' indigenous knowledge into the western knowledge content and concepts in order to enhance their epistemological access and provide equal opportunities to learn, thus appreciating local community knowledge in education and development. Curricula should also be reviewed in order to align them to the school's clientele base/learners towards enabling the provision of equal opportunities to learn.

Overall, this study concludes that, although the school had experienced Morphogenesis in terms of learner enrolment from a predominantly racially singular to a racially diverse learning population. However, the apartheid-era culture of the school was still reproduced due to the Morphostasis of the (White) teacher complement, the languages taught and the dominant school culture that was not congruent with the majority of the (Black) learners. I believe that the findings from this study may provide the conceptual and empirical foundations towards understanding whether teachers provide or fail to provide equal opportunities to learn in racially diverse classrooms in a country emerging from apartheid. I note that this is a singular case study that is not necessarily generalisable. However, it can provide insights into the extent of provision of equal opportunities to learning for the racially diverse learner population across South African schools.

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this thesis to

**My husband, Mpho Nenweli**

For your fountain of love, understanding, kindness and inspiration that helped me to rise above the times when the waves were too strong for me alone.

Thank you for giving my academic life so much meaning.

**My daughters: Marubini and Maemu**

For allowing me to sacrifice the valuable time that I should have spent with you, for always believing in me, praying for me and providing me with the remote motivation that kept me going.

**My dear mother, Lindah Mokgano Sehlola and my uncle, Peter Mpane Sehlola**

Who encouraged me to commence a transformational journey in my life time and for continuously reminding me that education is a key to success.

**To the loving memory of my grandmother, Raleboge Linah Sehlola**

Who did not live to see a doctor in her family and whose spirit served as a source of motivation and determination towards the completion of this study.

I will always love you

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To GOD Almighty, without whose origin of wisdom, knowledge and insights my human quests would have been unproductive. My pillar of strength has always been:

*Jeremiah 29: 11*

*“For I know the plans I have for you”, declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not harm you, plans to give you hope and a future”*

*Isaiah 41: 10*

*“So, do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you, I will uphold you with my righteous hand”*

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## LIST OF ACRONYMS

ANA:	Annual National Assessment
CAMI:	Computer Aided Maths Instruction
CAPS:	Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement
CEP:	Cultural Emergent Properties
CEB:	College of Education
CNE:	Christian National Education
ELAA:	Education Laws Amendment Act
FEA:	Forum on Educational Accountability
FET:	Further Education and Training
GELAA:	Gauteng Education Laws Amendment Act
GEPA:	Gauteng Education Policy Act
HOD:	Head of Department
LOLT:	Language of Learning and Teaching
LTSM:	Learner Teacher Support Material
IRB:	Institutional Review Board
MEC:	Member of the Executive Council
NEP:	National Education Policy
NCS:	National Curriculum Statement
OTL:	Opportunities to learn
PEP:	People Emergent Properties
RNCS:	Revised National Curriculum Statement
SA:	South Africa
SASA:	South African Schools Act
SEP:	Structural Emergent Properties
SES:	Socio-Economic Status
SGB:	School Governing Body
SMT:	School Management Team
SWOT:	Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats
UNISA:	University of South Africa
USA:	United States of America

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## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

## 1.1 Introduction

The South African educational system under the apartheid era resulted in South Africans (SA) being schooled in racially segregated environments. A system of racial classification differentiated between White, Indian, Coloured and Black children, and forced them to attend separate schools that were located in their exclusive zones of urban space, farming or mining contexts based on race and colour (Carrim, 1998; Selod & Zenou, 2003). Black African students, who comprised the majority, were therefore forced to attend schools in designated rural “homelands” called Bantustans or in the black urban townships of the country. Whites, Coloureds and Indians were also allocated separate schools located in their racially isolated residential areas.

During the apartheid era, there were 19 racially based education departments in South Africa, each serving different racially defined groups of learners (Department of Education, 2001:7). These distinct and fragmented departments ran schools for four main racial groups, namely Whites, Black Africans, Indians and Coloureds located in urban areas, whereas other departments ran schools for Black Africans in each of the ten Bantustan homelands (Venda, Lebowa, Qwaqwa, Ciskei, KwaZulu, KaNgwane, Transkei, Gazankulu, KwaNdebele, Bophuthatswana<sup>2</sup>). The majority of the apartheid era learners in each of the socially constructed racial groups were limited to attending schools as well as institutions of higher education operated by the relevant department of education (Fiske & Ladd, 2004).

Notably, racially segregated education during apartheid South Africa was never equal education. In contrast to Black, Coloured and Indian education, education for “racially superior” Whites was compulsory, free and better resourced by the state (Booyesen, 2003). Black education, on the other hand, suffered from the consequences of inadequate provision of physical education facilities, shortage of schools, lack of running water, toilet facilities and

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<sup>2</sup> [http://www.sahistory.org.za/special – feature/homelands](http://www.sahistory.org.za/special-feature/homelands).

electricity, lack of funds, unqualified teachers, curriculum deficiencies, and lack of teaching and learning resources among other deficiencies.

Funding per learner in South Africa was also determined in terms of race. For example, schools serving White learners were allocated more funds than schools serving Black, Coloured and Indian learners. For example, apartheid funding resulted in an average teacher-learner ratio of 1:18 in White schools, 1:24 in Indian schools, 1:27 in Coloured schools and 1:39 in Black schools (Ocampo, 2004). The quality of educators and teaching and learning resources in White schools was different compared to the quality of educators in Black, Coloured and Indian schools. For instance, the White schools had educators of higher quality and far more superior facilities than schools serving Black, Coloured and Indian learners (Fiske & Ladd, 2004; Ocampo, 2004).

South Africa has always been a culturally diverse society. Desegregation and the changes in the educational systems and educational institutions (e.g., schools, universities) in the post-apartheid era brought great challenges for educators and society at large. For instance, the diversity of the learner population in all schools, particularly in the former White schools, has increased, curricula have changed with a standardised curricula now being used in each learning phase across the country, and a new educational administration system has been introduced. The increasing cultural diversity in post-apartheid educational institutions requires that educators teach and manage learners with cultures, languages and racial backgrounds that are unknown to them (Meier & Hartell, 2009). However, the opening of schools to all races does not automatically ensure mutual understanding and acceptance between educators and learners and amongst learners themselves (du Toit, 1996: 8-9).

Racial integration in post-apartheid South African schools still remains a challenge, particularly in ensuring that all learners share similar opportunities to receive a good quality education and that schools provide equal access to all learners who live within a school's



vicinity regardless of their social class or colour (Department of Education (DoE), 2001:5)<sup>3</sup>. The DoE (2001) also indicates that integration is still a challenge, particularly in ensuring that schools treat all learners with respect and that all schools teach learners how to live together in mutual understanding and harmony. The legacy of apartheid education in South Africa, characterised by racially segregated schools and under-resourcing of schools for Coloureds, Indian and Blacks compared to White schools, is still evident in the large educational differentials between Whites, Coloureds, Indian and Blacks (van der Berg, 2007).

A significant number of teachers currently serving as educators in post-apartheid South Africa received their professional education and entered the teaching profession when education was still an integral part of the apartheid project (Department of Education, 2006). However, after democracy in 1994, the new South African government promised to provide equal opportunities for education to all racial groups and provinces (Republic of South Africa 1996a; 1996b). Hence, teachers had to adapt to a series of drastic educational transformations launched by the post-apartheid government. The South African Schools Act (SASA; Act no. 37 of 1996), supported by the Bill of Rights and the new South African Constitution, formalised racial integration across all schools in South Africa, and created an opportunity for learners from diverse cultural backgrounds to attend schools of their choice. In other words, the Act prohibits public and private schools from denying learners access based on background characteristics such as race and disability. It also compels public schools to admit all learners within their vicinity and make sure that these learners are not unfairly discriminated against (SASA, 1996). It was anticipated that, in creating this opportunity, learners would become fully included into the whole school environment and that the seeds of a new society would be sown (Vandeyar, 2008).

Post-apartheid racial integration within South African schools has made possible the transition from schools that catered exclusively for one racial or ethnic group in the apartheid era to multicultural schools in the present era. However, this has created pressure on teachers in order for them to adapt to a dynamic and changing school clientele. Specifically, teachers

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<sup>3</sup>Since 2009 the department is referred to as the Department of Basic Education.

are faced with dealing with learner diversity in their classrooms who they had not been exposed to in the past. This challenge is aggravated by the fact that most teachers completed their teacher training during the racially segregated (apartheid) education system, which was based on the notion that they would be teaching learners from their particular racial group. Most indigenous teachers came to terms with teaching through the medium of their second language (English) to learners who are not proficient in this foreign language of instruction (Carrim, 1998; Soudien, 2004; Vandeyar, 2005).

Accordingly, this study asks: how are South African teachers responding to challenges posed by the new policies that encourage the racial integration of schools in the post-apartheid era? In particular, this research investigates whether teachers in post-apartheid era schools provide, or fail to provide, learners in racially diverse classrooms with equal opportunities to learn. This inquiry therefore examines the effectiveness of teaching strategies and resources that teachers use to provide equal opportunities to learn in racially diverse South African classrooms.

## **1.2 Background and context of the study**

The democratic government formulated several education policies aimed at transforming education at all levels, that is, from pre-primary to tertiary. Most importantly, these policies were formulated to effect redress and ensure equity with the goal of providing equal education for all (Lange, 2012:8). Former White, Coloured or Indian schools in South Africa that were previously populated by learners from only one racial group now have a more racially diverse learner population (Lumby & Heystek, 2008). In some cases, the school teaching staff complement in such schools has also changed and is now more representative of the learner profile. On the other hand, in former Black schools the staff members have remained fairly stable, as has the racial enrolment of learners. The new education policies made sure that there is a racially equitable education system where race does not play an explicit role in how the education system is structured (Fiske & Ladd, 2004). The new government further made sure that funds are distributed to schools in what Fiske and Ladd

(2004:5) called “race-blindness” and equalising manner, based on demographic factors such as the number of learners in a school.

In order to implement redress, the South African National Department of Basic Education began with the redistribution of funds that used to be channelled to wealthier provincial education departments such as Western Cape Province and Gauteng Province to the poorest education departments and worked on equalising learner/educator ratios across provinces (Lange, 2012). However, that does not mean that all schools have equal resources at their disposal (Fiske & Ladd, 2004). Obviously, former White schools that were better supported by the apartheid government remained a step ahead. Some of the township schools still do not have enough teaching and learning resources as well as proper physical infrastructure. Motala and Dieltiens (2010) argue that the poor state of school infrastructure, such as inadequate classrooms, lack of decent toilets and playgrounds, reduces the availability of a healthy and conducive learning environment. An international study conducted in the USA showed that millions of children from low-income homes and children of colour do not have adequate access to educational opportunities because their schools and communities cannot provide the conditions all children require to achieve at high levels of performance (Forum on Educational Accountability (FEA), 2008).

In his paper, *“The revitalization of Higher Education: Access, Equity and Quality”*, Pityana (2009) defines equity in education as non-discriminatory access to educational resources of equal quality and significance to enhance educational attainment. In other words, equity implies that every learner, irrespective of colour, socio-economic background, race, religion, amongst others, must have equal access to educational materials, epistemological (knowledge) access, and the ability to understand the language of teaching and learning in order to realise good academic performance. Educational resources, instruments and curricula must speak to the learners’ real, experienced world (Pityana, 2009). The Forum on Educational Accountability (FEA) (2008) states that the diverse learning needs of all children require individualised instruction and safe learning environments. Learners from diverse racial, cultural and language groups, socio-economic background and diverse learning

abilities, among other issues, present unique educational requirements that must be correctly addressed. I agree with Pityana (2009) and the FEA (2008) because learners should see themselves and others, as well as their racial and cultural backgrounds, equally represented in the curriculum through the teaching and learning resources and processes.

According to du Plessis (2000), equality in education is about equal treatment of different genders, the physically and mentally challenged and religious and cultural groups. In other words, du Plessis (2000) is suggesting that every learner, irrespective of their gender, physical and mental state, culture and religion, must be treated equally in terms of the provision of quality education. I concur with du Plessis' (2000) argument as this will maintain respect for equal rights to quality education for all and it will ensure equal participation of all learners in the classroom lessons. Barret (2006) defines equality in education as a remarkable approach which highlights the continuation of academic standards.

Racial integration is defined by the Department of Education (2001:10) as *"individuals from all racial backgrounds enjoying the rights to access and taking part in all aspects of the management and services of the education institutions"*. The aim of the South African government in desegregating schools was to bring about integration among learners of different racial backgrounds in order to provide equal educational opportunities for all (Sujee, 2004). Notably, not all schools which have learners from various racial backgrounds are racially integrated (DoE, 2001). Meier and Hartell (2009) contend that the decentralisation of education actually provided racially defined communities with the legal means to maintain their privileges and their schools have been succeeding at meeting their demand for racial segregation rather than achieving the ideal of social integration.

The South African society is highly diverse. Society is multilingual, multicultural, and multi-religious (Mati, 2004). This presents great challenges for schools. These challenges include increased demands for excellent, well-trained teachers who are concerned with and dedicated to providing successful educational experiences for all students, despite their social

status, ethnic or linguistic background (Ball, 2000). It is a challenge for teachers to integrate subject content and students' languages and cultures in ways that are meaningful and relevant for their students (Lee, 2001). Teachers fail to recognise and tend to ignore or even criticize the knowledge and experiences that the students bring to the learning process (*ibid.*). Similarly, methods of teaching various components of the subjects are mechanically presented to children without any attempts to connect it with the crucial 'prior' knowledge of the learners (Odora-Hoppers, 2001). New subject contents are used with limited efforts to ensure that children first understand the subject in relation to their lived reality (*ibid.*). This, in other words, shows that children's epistemological (knowledge) access is limited, because their indigenous knowledge is ignored, and educators perpetuate the western knowledge hegemony. Shava (2013) argues that there is lack of contextual relevance of modern education systems and this relates to the subordination and exclusion of the educational role of the local community and its knowledge. That is, through formal education, people become alienated from their own culture and are absorbed into Western culture to the detriment of their own culture. Schools in Africa tend to make learners less-informed of the indigenous knowledge, which is the basis of the way of life of their societies (*ibid.*). It is essential for education to be connected to the immediate society where learners come from in order to move outside the enclosed classroom and the individual to engage the community context, and to appreciate the role of local community knowledge in education and development (Opoku, 1999). Indigenous knowledges can enable epistemological access for indigenous learners (Shava and Manyike, 2018). The teaching of multiculturalism does not necessarily mean the end of cultural disenfranchisement of the marginalised. This implies that the teaching of multiracial learners should include the integration of their indigenous knowledge into the lessons so that their epistemological access is not constrained (Jay, 2003).

The quality of a teacher's knowledge, education, the educational policy framework, and the connection between these appear to be the key underlying causal mechanisms influencing teaching practices and epistemological access (Lotz-Sisitka, 2009). The constructivist epistemological assumptions of the curriculum also appear to be influencing teaching practices in ways that constrain epistemological access. There is a need to not only concentrate on the acquisition of concepts and content, within the framework of existing

modern vertical and horizontal knowledge structures in teaching practices, but there is also a need to allow children to experiment with open-ended, reflexive epistemological questions such as ‘what could be done now?’ and ‘how can we respond to different situations with what we know?’ (*ibid.*). Students fail because of cultural mismatch between students and the school, which means they lack epistemological access (Ladson-Billings, 1994). One knowledge system, that is, the Western system and its epistemology must not serve as a yardstick for all systems and thus diverse knowledge systems should not be condensed to seeing the world through the logic of Western knowledge systems and their perilous assumption of other knowledges (Shiva, 2000). This implies that indigenous knowledge systems are as significant as the Western knowledge systems and should also be integrated into the education system in order to enhance epistemological access of indigenous learners. Children do not enter the classroom empty, but they have prior knowledge of the things they learned from home and in their communities, so if teaching incorporates what children know into what is taught, then their epistemological access will be expanded, and they will be provided with equal opportunities to learn and their academic achievement will improve.

Culturally responsive teaching can be seen as an initial step towards bridging the gap between home and school (Erickson & Mohatt, 1982). In the study “*Toward a Theory of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy*”, Ladson-Billings (1994) argues that culturally relevant teachers do the following:

- Establish the student-teacher relationships that are equitable and reciprocal,
- Demonstrate a connectedness with all students,
- Develop a community of learners, rather than competitive and individual achievement,
- Encourage higher academic success for the entire class,
- Encourage students to learn collaboratively, teach each other and be responsible for academic success of others.

I concur with Erickson and Mohatt (1982) and Ladson-Billings (1994) that culturally relevant pedagogy can increase students’ epistemological access and yield higher academic performance of all students as students will be able to integrate their indigenous knowledge with what is taught in the classroom.

A pro-diversity approach to teaching and learning is the best method to reach racially diverse learners. This approach centres on a transformative curriculum and diversified pedagogical approaches, which together better equip teachers to meet the challenges of a teaching and learning environment (Pahad, 2007). Thus, it's the teaching approaches and appropriate curriculum that enable the provision of equal opportunities to learn to racially diverse learners rather than the race of the teacher. The present study asks: what kinds of learning opportunities currently subsist in racially diverse classrooms and how do teachers deal with learners from diverse racial backgrounds? This is the problem I seek to investigate with respect to the provision of equal learning opportunities in diverse classrooms at one multiracial primary school in the Gauteng Province. The present study examines whether or not teachers provide all racially diverse learners with equal opportunities to learn.

### **1.3 The significance of the study**

The purpose of this study was to uncover and understand whether teachers in a selected post-apartheid South African multiracial school provide or fail to provide learners from diverse racial backgrounds with equal opportunities to learn. More specifically, the study sought to identify the factors that support or constrain the provision of equal opportunities to learn for all racially diverse learners, whether or not they use relevant methods of teaching (explanations, questions, and activities) and teaching resources, and whether the methods they utilise assist or constrain learners to comprehend the instructional materials.

### **1.4 Rationale of the study**

I completed my primary and secondary schooling in all-Black schools. I also received my Bachelor of Arts in Education and Bachelor of Honours Degrees from a Black university (former Vista University, Mamelodi campus, now part of the University of Pretoria). Though, I obtained my Master's degree from a historically White university (University of Pretoria), I did not do coursework but a thesis only. In addition, my supervisor was a Black academic at this university. In short, I did not experience classroom interaction with students from other racial backgrounds in my educational journey. I was curious, therefore, as to how teachers

encounter and engage students from racially diverse backgrounds and to what extent they provide equal opportunities to learn to all students in the post-apartheid era.

As a teacher who taught at primary schools for three years and at tertiary level for two years, I noticed an increase in the number of Black learners and students enrolling at private schools or former all-White schools and former all-White universities. My observation that higher percentages of Black learners attend racially mixed schools is also supported by the literature (Motala & Vally, 2002; Nkomo, McKinney & Chisholm, 2004; Soudien, 2004; Nkomo & Vandeyar, 2008). Further, literature has revealed that there has been significant racial redress in education in terms of equality of opportunity and increased access by Black African learners to schools previously closed to them (Chisholm, 2008). This observation of a large ratio of Black learners attending private or former White schools and education students enrolling at former all-White universities prompted my interest in studying teachers' provision (or non-provision) of equal learning opportunities to racially diverse learners in their classrooms.

I embarked on this research by engaging the expansive literature on the work of teachers in racially integrated schools and classrooms (Oakes & Lipton, 1990; Stevens, 1993; Stein, 2000; Lee, 2001; White, 2003; Gay, 2002). I was particularly interested in the literature on the provision of opportunities to learn by teachers of racially diverse learners. I noted the work of other researchers in this regard, and their call for further research on opportunities to learn in racially diverse classrooms left me with the challenge to take up this quest in this study.

From the literature cited above, I discovered that there was limited research done on opportunities to learn in racially diverse South African classrooms. At this point I became interested in using the concept of 'Opportunities to Learn' (OTL) to study what goes on in racially diverse South African classrooms in terms of the teaching and learning. This further elevated my interest and inquisitiveness on the topic. It is hoped that this study will therefore fill the gap in literature on the provision of equal opportunities to learn in racially diverse classrooms in South Africa. The significance of this study is that it can provide the conceptual



and empirical foundations for understanding whether teachers provide, or fail to provide, equal opportunities to learn in racially diverse classrooms in a country recently emerging from apartheid segregation.

To conduct the research project, the study investigated the following **main research question**:

How effective are teaching strategies employed by teachers to provide learners with equal opportunities to learn in racially diverse classrooms at one primary school in the Gauteng Province?

The following **sub-questions** also guided this study:

- What kinds of teaching strategies do teachers use in Social Science and English in the Grade 6 and 7 classes to promote equal OTL?
- What kinds of teaching and learning resources do teachers use in Social Science and English in the Grade 6 and 7 classes to provide learners with equal OTL?
- How effective are these teaching strategies and resources in helping learners from diverse racial backgrounds to understand the content of the lessons?

### **1.5 Aims and objectives of the study**

This study was aimed at investigating whether or not teachers provide equal opportunities to learn in racially diverse classrooms. In order to achieve this aim, the following objectives were pursued:

- To explore the kinds of teaching approaches that teachers use in Social Science and English in Grade 6 and 7 classes to promote equal OTL;
- To investigate the types of teaching and learning resources that teachers apply in Social Science and English in Grade 6 and 7 classes to provide learners with equal OTL; and
- To determine how effective these teaching methods and resources are in enabling learners to understand the content of the lessons.

## **1.6 Theoretical framework**

This study was informed by Margaret Archer's (1995) Morphogenesis/Morphostasis theoretical framework. The purpose of this study was to explore whether teachers in the post-apartheid era provide or fail to provide learners in racially diverse classrooms with equal opportunities to learn. Specifically, I wanted to examine whether the participating school (a former White school, now a multiracial primary school) has been transformed (Morphogenesis) or reproduced (Morphostasis) in terms of its structure, culture and practices in the post-apartheid era. The study also adopted Critical Realism ontology as a meta-theory established by Bhaskar (2008) and supported by Margaret Archer (1995)'s Social Realist approach. Critical Realism develops a stratified ontology and an underlying theoretical framework that informs the empirical research. Critical Realist ontology consists of the domains of the real, the actual and the empirical. The aim of the research was, therefore, to identify and uncover those underlying structures and mechanisms (at the level of 'real') that are stimulated to produce occurrences and phenomena (at the level of the 'actual' and 'empirical'). The Social Realist framework provides a valuable methodological approach to carrying out social research (Archer, 1995; Layton, 2012). Social Realism separates the social world into the domains of structure, culture and agency and these three domains can be investigated individually through what Archer (1995) called 'analytical dualism' to provide a researcher with an opportunity to understand their relationship. I adopted this framework as it assisted me to examine different ways in which various structures and practices of the school itself as well as other systems within the school serve to enable or hinder the provision of equal opportunities to learn, thus enhancing or limiting learners' epistemological access. More elaboration about the theoretical framework adopted in this study is provided in Chapter 3.

## **1.7 Research Methodology**

### **1.7.1 Qualitative research approach**

Researching a complex and dynamic process such as the effectiveness of teaching strategies and resources employed in racially diverse classrooms presented methodological challenges. In this study I used the qualitative research approach to find out whether or not teachers provide racially diverse learners with equal opportunities to learn. The qualitative research approach allows for exploration into “how”, “why”, “where”, and “when” questions, the responses of which necessitate the participants to share their beliefs, thoughts, ideas and practices (Denzin & Lincoln, 2002). In an attempt to capture the underlying mechanisms that enable or constrain the provision of equal opportunities to learn, I used qualitative methods that enabled me carry out the study in a natural setting (multiracial primary school) and interact with the participants in order to have in-depth understanding of the problem under investigation (Creswell, 2009). Further explanation is provided in Chapter 4.

### **1.7.2 Case study**

I chose a single case study design within the qualitative research approach to examine and provide a detailed description of certain events and explanations for these events (Yin, 2003). The general area of this study was basic education, with specific focus on the effectiveness of teaching strategies and resources employed in racially diverse classrooms. Because I was utilising Critical Realism (Bhaskar, 2008) as a meta-theory, supported by Social Realism (Archer, 1995), as lenses through which to explore the data, I intended to uncover what were the underlying causal mechanisms generating events and processes in this particular area. More details are provided in Chapters 3 and 4.

### **1.7.3 Sampling**

In conducting this study, the nature of schooling was given attention. In South Africa, there are four phases of schooling, namely the Foundation Phase (from Grade R (reception year class) to Grade 3), the intermediate Phase (from Grades 4 to 6), the Senior Phase (from Grades 7 to 9) and Further Education and Training (FET) Band (which runs from Grades 10 to 12)) (DoE, 2004:15). For the purpose of this study, I purposively sampled two Senior Phase teachers who teach English and Social Sciences, the school principal and sixteen Senior Phase learners (eight Grade 6 and eight Grade 7 learners).

The Department of Basic Education is responsible for educational policy across the country. Each of the nine provinces has a provincial department of education, and they manage education districts. The Gauteng Province has fifteen education districts. Tshwane South District is one of the education districts in the province. The study was carried out in one multiracial primary school (Arabia) (pseudonym) situated in the Tshwane South District. The school is located in Pretoria, 4.4 kilometres from Pretoria city centre. It is a multiracial school and it has its own history and culture of teaching and learning. I purposefully chose this school as it caters for learners who come from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds and it demonstrates some structures or practices (former White school and multiracial teaching staff and learners) in which I was interested (Silverman, 2005). I wanted to explore whether these structures or cultural practices enable or constrain teachers to provide equal opportunities to learn in a racially diverse class. Further details are provided in Chapter 4.

### **1.7.4 Data collection methods**

I used semi-structured interview questions, non-participatory observation of teaching and learning as well as the analysis of relevant documents that are used for teaching and learning, pre- and post-apartheid era education policies, school policies such as language, religious and

admission policies, amongst others. A detailed elaboration on the research methods is provided in Chapter 4.

#### **1.7.5 Data analysis and interpretation**

As I have already indicated, this study adopted a Critical Realist position developed by Bhaskar and strengthened by Archer's Social Realism (Archer, 1995; Bhaskar, 2008). Social Realism provides an analytical framework which allowed me to differentiate the school in line with the domains of structure, culture and agency in order to understand their relationship in producing certain events. In order to analyse the collected data, I made use of Archer's analytical framework and separated data that I have gathered according to the three domains of the social world (in this case, the world of a multiracial primary school), i.e., structure, culture and agency. It is critical to indicate that these different domains are related and inter-reliant and there is much connection between them; therefore, it was important to artificially separate them in order to examine them individually to explore their interaction in the context of teaching and learning in racially diverse classes and whether they support or hinder the provision of equal opportunities to learn. Further details are provided in Chapters 3 and 4.

#### **1.7.6 Trustworthiness of the study**

A number of measures were taken into consideration to make sure that participants were trustworthy and truthful in order to achieve credibility of the research findings. These entailed purposive sampling of the study sites and participants, the use of various applicable data collection methods and research instruments and maintaining the necessary ethical standards for carrying out research with human beings. In line with the approaches of Cohen, Manion and Morris (2007) to strengthen qualitative research, I focused on the credibility, transferability, confirmability, and dependability of the study. By providing a rich account of the research process and looking for incongruous evidence or rival explanation, I believe that

I improved *credibility* of the study. My prolonged engagement in the field and the member checks that I conducted by discussing the emergent themes with the participants, my understanding and interpretations with teachers and school principal also improved the *credibility* of the findings. I have provided in-depth and detailed descriptions of the findings with the aim of strengthening *transferability*. My presence in the field strengthened *dependability* of the interpretations and I also mirrored my bias and subjectivity in the study. I also used various methods of data collection to build consistent justification of the emergent themes. Further elaboration is provided in Chapter 4.

### **1.7.7 Ethical considerations**

Maree (2010) states that research that directly involves human beings has methodological and ethical implications. This research involved teachers, the school principal and learners and I took the precautions to ensure that procedures utilised to gather data were ethical. Before I commenced with data collection, I obtained an ethical clearance certificate from the University of South Africa's (UNISA) College of Education (CEDU) Research Ethics Committee. I also obtained permission from the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE), under whose authority the school falls. Further, permission was obtained from the school in which I collected data and issues of informed consent, privacy and confidentiality were taken into consideration (Bryman, 1988).

Prior to seeking informed consent from the participants, I informed them of the nature of the study and the consequences of the research (Creswell, 2007). After I had communicated the aims of the study, I sought informed consent from the teachers, school principal, parents of the learners and learners to participate in the study, highlighting that it was voluntary and that they were at liberty to withdraw from the research at any time (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Creswell, 2002). I prepared consent and assent forms which I asked teachers, the school principal and learners' parents to sign before they participated in the research (Creswell, 2005). I did not encounter any reluctance or objections to further request for consent to record the interviews. More details are provided in Chapter 4.

## **1.8 Outline of chapters**

This thesis is divided into eight chapters:

In Chapter 1, a synopsis of this study is provided. This includes a brief background and context for the study. The statement of purpose, the rationale for the study, the research objectives and the research questions are also presented.

In Chapter 2, I provide a literature review for the study. This includes the discussion on how the previous studies conceptualised opportunities to learn and teaching and learning in racially diverse classrooms.

In Chapter 3, I explain in detail the theoretical framework that guided the study. I also discuss Bhaskar's (2008) three domains of reality and Margaret Archer's (1995) three levels of analytical dualism and how they are applicable to my study.

In Chapter 4, I describe the research paradigm, the research design and methods used in the study. I give details of my choice of research design and the sampling of participants and provide a detailed description of the data collection process and strategies. I also explain how I addressed issues of quality criteria in the qualitative research approach and issues of ethical considerations.

In Chapter 5, I present narrative accounts, based on findings of the research, on whether or not teachers provide equal opportunities to learn in racially diverse classrooms within the domain of 'structure' in Archer's Morphogenetic/Morphostasis Social Realist framework. I have mostly outlined the data in line with a Social Realist approach by reflecting on some of the mechanisms of teaching and learning that could be understood to belong to the layer of 'structure'.

In Chapter 6, I discuss my findings within Archer's stratum of 'culture', which are based on the school cultural aspects, engaging in whether these aspects enabled or constrained the provision of equal opportunities to learn in racially diverse classes.

In Chapter 7, I discuss my findings within Archer's domain of 'agency'. I consider 'the people' by focusing on whether their agency is enabled or constrained with regard to the provision of equal opportunities to learn in racially diverse classrooms.

In Chapter 8, I present a summary of the key findings, limitations as well as conclusions and recommendations for further research.

## **1.9 Conclusion**

The main purpose of this chapter is to provide readers with the background of the study that will offer them an understanding of my research focus, questions and the background, summary of the theoretical framework that has informed the study, the research methodology, quality criteria as well the ethical considerations. Having established the above basis for the study, in the next chapter I explore what other researchers prior to this study are saying about the provision of opportunities to learn in racially diverse classrooms.



## **CHAPTER TWO: OPPORTUNITIES TO LEARN IN RACIALLY DIVERSE CLASSROOMS**

## **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter provides a literature review on opportunities to learn in racially diverse classrooms. The chapter discusses the literature on the provision of opportunities to learn and on teaching and learning processes in racially diverse classes in the international landscape and within the local South African context. In reviewing both international and national literature, I found some researchable issues, especially on the effectiveness of teaching and learning strategies in racially diverse contexts, that have not been covered by research conducted on this topic in the South African context.

## **2.2 Opportunities to Learn in racially diverse classrooms: The international landscape**

Researchers in the international arena have maintained that learning experiences are different for learners from different social economic statuses (SEs) and for learners in different ability or track classrooms. Low performing learners (low-track placement) and learners from low SE are taught a simplified curriculum with less detailed content, and are provided with fewer learning opportunities while high-performing learners (high-track placement) and affluent learners are afforded the opportunity for learning problem-solving skills (Oakes & Lipton, 1990; Oakes, Ormseth, Bell & Camp, 1990; Oakes, 1992; Wang, 1998; Herman & Abedi, 2004; Callan, 2005; RennieCentre, 2013). For instance, in a study conducted in California, Boscardin, Aguirre-Munoz, Stoker, Kim, and Lee (2005), found that learner characteristics such as poverty, family income, learner's English proficiency status and other socioeconomic indicators had a significant impact on learner outcomes. Furthermore, learners who were disadvantaged socio-economically were less likely to be taught by teachers who held full certification and a degree in their field.

In Massachusetts in the United States of America (USA) it was found that high performing schools had more educators who had specialised in key subject areas such as Science compared to low-performing schools and that the educators had more preparation time

(RennieCentre, 2013). High performing schools also had school leaders who supported Science instruction, had more Science funding, Science material resources, and real-world experiences for learners. Parental involvement at high performing schools was high compared to low performing schools (RennieCentre, 2013). The language used in classrooms vividly affected learners' opportunity and ability to learn (Pflepsen, 2011). Pflepsen (2011) also argues that learners who understand the language of instruction are more likely to perform better than those who do not understand the language. Similarly, the findings of a study conducted by Wang and Goldschmidt (1999) in California in the USA revealed that immigrant learners with poor English proficiency did not accomplish (in Mathematics) the same achievement levels of their English-proficient classmates. This implies that, if the students do not understand the language of teaching and learning, their epistemological access is restricted and their opportunities to learn are also limited.

Martínez, Bailey, Kerr, Huang and Beauregard (2010) conducted a study in California in the USA using a mixed methods approach to measure opportunities to learn (OTL) and academic language exposure for English language learners in Elementary Science classrooms. They found that proficient English language learners worked more one-on-one with the teacher compared to their non-proficient English language counterparts. In other words, English language learners got more opportunities to learn than non-English language learners. In terms of assessing learners' academic achievement, Martínez *et al.* (2010) revealed that educators paid more attention to the understanding of scientific concepts, the use of scientific vocabulary, knowledge of scientific facts and progress in terms of class with proficient English Language learners compared to when they evaluated non-proficient English language learners. This showed that there were differences in terms of the provision of opportunities to learn for proficient English language learners compared to non-proficient English language learners and in the manner in which those different groups of learners were being evaluated. This indicated that non-proficient English language learners did not get equal opportunities to learn compared to proficient English language learners, thus their epistemological access was also constrained due to their inability to comprehend the language of learning and teaching, which was not their indigenous (home) language.

While I acknowledge that the socio-economic background, English language proficiency and learner ability have an effect on learners' learning opportunities, my study seeks to understand whether or not South African teachers provide equal opportunities to learn who come from diverse racial backgrounds. This study attempts to find out whether teachers take racial diversity into consideration during teaching and learning processes as it has a bearing on the teachers' ability to provide equal opportunities to learn.

Some researchers have noted that time is one of many resources managed by schools for the sake of educating children (Benavot & Amadio, 2004; Gillies & Jester-Quijada, 2008; Moore, DeStefano & Gillies, 2006; ECONorthwest, 2010). The time learners spend at school and the way the allocated time is used are very crucial. The basis of opportunities to learn is that learning is a function of time and effort (Gillies & Jester-Quijada, 2008). Moore, DeStefano and Gillies (2006) observed and maintain that, without sufficient direct instructional time, no learning is possible. Learner achievement increases when learners are provided with more opportunities to learn, particularly when the allocated learning time is being used effectively (Benavot & Amadio, 2004). Investment in educators, teaching and learning materials, curricula, and classrooms are wasted if they are not being used for a reasonable period of time (Gillies & Jester-Quijada, 2008). This implies that time, particularly how allocated time is being used in the classrooms for teaching and learning, is critical as it has an impact on learners' opportunities to learn, access to knowledge and ultimately their academic performance. Notably, equality of opportunities to learn requires increasing the amount of instructional time for the least prepared learners to help them to master the curriculum (Carrol, 1989). It is further suggested that the amount of time spent on teaching and learning is determined by two factors, namely the opportunities to learn in the form of the amount of time the school and teacher allocate to a specific learning task and learner perseverance or the amount of time the learner is willing to engage actively in learning (*ibid.*).

The literature on time-on-task revealed that opportunities to learn and learners' performance were increased in the classes where educators maintained the continuity of the lesson

(Berliner, 1990:4-5; Zimmerman & Carlos, 1999). The varied aspects of instructional time have been explained as follows (*ibid.*):

- *Allocated time* – the overall and subject instructional time allocated by the state.
- *Engaged time* – time in which students are paying attention to material resources with instructional goals.
- *Academic learning time* – a precise period when instructional activity is perfectly aligned with a student's readiness and learning occurs.
- *Time-on-task* – a subset of engaged time, it measures learner engagement only on a specific learning task, rather than general engagement that may not be related to the assignment.
- *Aptitude and perseverance* – measures learner ability and willingness to engage in the academic task.
- *Pace* – measures the instructional mix of content and time.
- *Transition time and waiting time* – measures of non-instructional use of allocated time.

Silva (2007:5) states that there is a strong relationship between the amount of academic learning time and student achievement, a weak relationship between engaged time and student achievement, and there is no relationship between allotted time and student achievement. In their study on "*the effect of active teaching and subject content coverage on students' achievement: evidence from primary schools in Kenya*", Moses, Mutisya, Sagwe, Musyoka and Ngware (2012) found that exposure to content was positively related to student achievement, but they found no correlation between time-on-task and student achievement. Drawing from the above literature, the present study explored whether or not teachers are taking time into consideration in the provision of equal opportunities to learn in a racially diverse class.

Kher, Schmidt, Houang and Zou (2007) argue that curriculum differentiation can potentially create inequalities in learners' opportunities to learn. In Colorado, USA, Snow-Renner (2001) observed that different classrooms were characterized by different levels of exposure to

content and instructional practices. Learners in some classrooms received instructions on the topics that were being assessed while learners in other classrooms were not given instructions on such topics. In the same vein, Cooper and Liou (2007) observed in California that learners were less equipped with information that prepares them for high school and further than high school. They state that positive teacher-learner relationships are critical to create enhanced opportunities for learning. Drawing from the above literature, in this research I explored whether exposure to relevant content required by the curriculum has implications on the provision of equal opportunities to learn for learners who come from diverse racial backgrounds in the classrooms.

The achievement gap in Mathematics was observed to be a problem resulting in unequal opportunities to learn being experienced by many learners from low-income homes, particularly Latino and African American students in Delaware, USA (Flores, 2007). Flores' (2007) study revealed that African American, Latino, and learners from low-income families were less likely to have access to experienced and qualified teachers, more likely to face low expectations, and were less likely to receive equitable per-student funding. Likewise, in a study conducted in California, Herman and Abedi (2004) observed that ethnic minority learners, including English language learners, normally achieved poorly in Mathematics because they had less exposure to content and their instruction tended to cover less content compared to non-minority learners. They found that there were disparities in the provision of equal opportunities to learn for English language and non-English language learners. Learners with lower levels of English language proficiency had less content coverage (Abedi, Courtney, Leon, Kao & Azzam, 2006). Nevertheless, Boscardin *et al.* (2005) observed in California that higher levels of content exposure in both writing and literary analyses were linked with higher performance for all learners, including non-English learners. In relation to the present study, this implies that the Language of Learning and Teaching (LOLT), which is English, used by the participating school might constrain the provision of equal opportunities to learn in racially diverse classrooms. In other words, learners who are English Second Language Speakers might not have similar learning opportunities compared to English First Language Speakers.

According to the above findings, there is an achievement discrepancy between native English speaking and non-English speaking learners. Native English-speaking learners continue to outperform non-English speaking learners in Mathematics and Literacy because they are preferentially given adequate content coverage (that is adequate OTL) and they have the added advantage of being first language speakers of the language in which they are taught and assessed. This study will seek to understand whether or not the language of teaching and learning has implications on the provision of equal opportunities to learn in racially diverse classes.

In a study done in Taiwan, it was found that learners of higher status in class tend to hold better and more learning opportunities and were able to take advantage of learning resources in a more active way (Huang, 2002). According to the Forum on Education Accountability (FEA) (2011), children from low-income households and children of colour do not have sufficient access to opportunity to learn as their schools and communities cannot provide all the conditions children need to achieve at high levels (FEA, 2011). In addition, they state that learners of lower status tend to take learning opportunities in a more passive way in processing the higher-level of thinking, and even tend to avoid learning resources (FEA, 2011). However, inquiry-based experiments have been shown to provide learners in Israel with opportunities to develop independent thinking, share ideas, cooperate with peers in the group and enhanced their ability to ask high-quality and relevant questions (Hofstein, Shore & Kipnis, 2004). In a study that was conducted in California, it was found that learners in classrooms with higher rating on opportunities to engage in conceptual discussions were able to build on their understandings and were more likely to achieve better in their performance on problem solving items (Waltz, 1999). This reveals the advantage of contextualized experiential learning as learners have access to knowledge and are able to understand the subject matter.

Based on the above research findings, I concur with Huang (2002) when he argues that the invisible status structures existing in the learner will indirectly affect the distribution of learning opportunities. I think this is the case since learners from affluent families are more

likely to have access (at home) to resources such as computers, mathematical instruments like calculators and educated parents. This enhances their epistemological access and learning opportunities in the classrooms compared to learners from poor families. The present study focuses on whether all learners, irrespective of racial and cultural backgrounds get the equal opportunities to learn and access to knowledge. In other words, the study examines the underlying mechanisms that enable or constrain the provision of equal opportunities to learn in racially diverse classrooms.

Cueto, Ramirez, and Leon (2006) state that there are four dimensions of OTL: curriculum coverage, cognitive demand of the tasks posed to the learners, percentage of mathematical exercises that were correct, and quality of feedback. Cueto *et al.*'s (2006) study was conducted in Peru and the findings of their research indicated that, regarding OTL, less than half of the exercises available in the learners' workbooks were solved. They also discovered that teachers over-emphasised some topics of the national curriculum, they posed tasks that were at very low levels of cognitive demand, and mistakes were found in the learners' answers to problems that had no feedback from the teacher. However, Cueto *et al.*'s study does not pay attention to the actual provision of equitable opportunities to learn in a classroom context.

Wang (1998) and Stevens (1993) used content coverage, content exposure, content emphasis, quality of instructional delivery to study classroom practices in California and Washington and they came up with related findings. Wang (1998) found in California that content exposure was the most remarkable predictor of the written test scores, whereas quality of instructional delivery was the most notable predictor of hands-on test scores. Similarly, Stevens (1993) found in Washington that content exposure (time on task) had an impact on learners' achievement. For instance, the decrease in the number of days for reading instruction and the restricted number of minutes dedicated to the reading period deprived learners of adequate time to learn the curriculum (Stevens, 1993). Regarding the quality of instructional delivery, Stevens (1993) found that teachers did not know how to teach reading effectively. Herman, Klein and Abedi (2000) have conceptualised OTL in terms of curriculum



content, instructional strategies and instructional resources. In a study that was conducted in California, Herman *et al.* (2000) found that teachers used fairly innovative teaching strategies, they lacked mathematics background, and they used textbooks that were 5-7 years old. Kher, Schmidt, Houang and Zou (2007) examined high school mathematics trajectories in Chicago and found that curriculum differentiation exists at the high school level. Their study suggests that different content pathways provide different opportunities to learn within and between school districts in Chicago. Although research has been done on OTL and classroom practices, my study does not focus on how learners perform on high stakes tests. Rather, it focuses on the effectiveness of teaching strategies used, the time dedicated for teaching and learning, epistemological access, whether or not learners are being exposed to subject content required by the curriculum, and the implications of these aspects on the provision of equal opportunities to learn in a class of racially diverse learners.

Haggarty and Pepin (2002) conducted a research investigating Mathematics textbooks and their use in lower secondary schools in England, France and Germany. They found that learners in different countries were offered different types of mathematics and were given different opportunities to learn mathematics, both of which were influenced by the choice of textbooks and the teachers. In this study, I examined the kinds of instructional strategies and analyse teaching resources such as textbooks and other resources that teachers use in the classrooms of racially diverse learners in order to determine whether these strategies and resources enable or constrain the provision of equal opportunities to learn.

In summary, a review of research findings from the available literature related to this study above indicates that OTL refers to the curriculum, content coverage, content exposure, (time to learn), instructional quality, teaching and learning resources, teachers, and instructional strategies (Carroll, 1989; Steven, 1993; Wang, 1998; Waltz, 1999; Herman, *et al.*, 2000; Haggarty & Pepin, 2002; Boscardin *et al.*, 2005; Abedi, *et al.*, 2006; Cooper & Liou, 2007; Kher, *et al.*, 2007). However, from the literature review above, I discovered that there is limited coverage of issues of race, political history/background, and the representation of the knowledge of the different races in the curriculum. The present study thus specifically

explored the aspects of race and whether or not teachers are able to provide all learners with equitable epistemological access regardless of their racial background. The historical background of the selected school was also looked into to find out about the education policies that were driving the school before and after the apartheid regime and the implication of these policies on the provision of equal opportunities to learn.

The literature reviewed further indicates that all learners should be provided with equal opportunities to learn, have access to learning resources, high quality instruction, qualified and experienced teachers, and teaching that is aimed at critical thinking rather than rote learning (Baratz-Snowden, 1993; Herman *et al.*, 2000; Starrat, 2003; Copper & Liou, 2007). However, learners' ability, English proficiency, family background, social class, and race remain impediments to learners' epistemological access, opportunities to learn and academic success. The literature reveals that low English proficient, low socio-economic status and low performing learners are not provided with the equal opportunities to learn as their native English speaking, affluent and high performing students; and that teachers tend to have negative expectations about them, and thus teach them less (Waltz, 1999; Snow-Renner 2001; Huang 2002; Herman & Abedi 2004; Boscardin *et al.*, 2005; Abedi *et al.*, 2006; Cueto *et al.*, 2006; Flores 2007). It is evident that opportunities to learn are unequal for learners of different backgrounds and for learners across classrooms. I thus aimed to investigate whether or not teachers provide equal opportunities to learn in racially diverse classrooms in the South African context.

One gap in the literature is that OTL research did not bring out the primary sources of the disparities (such as race, culture, language, socio-economics issues, politics, history/background of the education system and so on) in the South African context for providing equal OTL, and neither did it measure the effectiveness of teaching and strategies and access to knowledge in providing equal opportunities to learn to racially diverse learners as explored in the present research. Another gap in past OTL studies is that most of them were conducted within the quantitative research paradigm and that they were mainly carried out in European and American countries, and in the areas of Literacy, Science and

Mathematics. There are limited OTL studies conducted in developing countries, particularly in the South African context. It is hoped that my study will extend the scope of the existing studies by observing the effectiveness of teaching strategies used by teachers in a class of racially diverse learners. I believe that this will add value, not only to the existing literature on OTL and racial diversity, but will also inform existing policies and practices, thereby contributing towards the design of better policies and practices for the provision of equal opportunities to learn to learners who come from diverse racial backgrounds.

## **2.2 Racial diversity: The international Landscape**

Research has revealed the need for students to be provided with equal learning opportunities to explore and construct meanings based on what they bring to the learning process. In research conducted in Florida, Lee (2001; 2003; 2005) observed that, for students from diverse backgrounds, learning improved once it happened in contexts that were linguistically and culturally meaningful and relevant to them. Lee (2001) used the concept of instructional congruence to describe the process of connecting the science disciplines with students' language and culture to make the academic content accessible and meaningful for all students. In a related study also done in Florida, Lee (2004) found that the teachers created a positive learning environment that was contributing to student participation. The teachers enabled the learning environment in that they communicated and interacted with their students in culturally appropriate ways. Teachers and students were engaged in cooperative, overlapping, and simultaneous talk, particularly when students were actively engaged in classroom tasks. This implies that when students' cultures and languages are integrated into the teaching practices, their access to knowledge and opportunities to learn are enhanced. Moore (2006) carried out research in New York, in the USA, and found that multicultural pre-service teachers understood that diversity presented challenges for teaching diverse learners and for teaching science. In a study done by Sharma (2007:25) in Florida, the findings revealed that white teachers were not professionally prepared to identify, understand and work with culturally and linguistically diverse students. Yang and McMullen (2003) conducted research in Indiana and found that parents became the most important informants in assisting primary-grade teachers to develop the understanding about the child's home culture, an aspect that

was essential to do scaffolding most effectively, building understanding and helping teachers to determine what would be most culturally and linguistically appropriate for their children.

From the above findings, it is evident that instructional practices that use the linguistic and cultural resources that students bring to the classroom created a favourable learning environment for all students. In other words, teachers need the knowledge of their disciplines as well as that of the students' languages and cultures in order to provide effective instruction for students from diverse backgrounds (Lee, 2001; Lee, 2003; Yang & McMullen, 2003; Lee, 2004; Lee, 2005; Sharma 2007).

Educators must recognise that culturally and linguistically diverse students also have their own cultural norms and values that they bring into the classroom that may conflict with the teacher's expectations (Terry & Irving, 2010). Teachers are in the best position to learn about the culture, norms, and values of their culturally and linguistically diverse students (*ibid.*). If teachers show interest in who students are, where they come from, and what their worldview is, teachers can demonstrate to them that they care about who they are and not just who they can become. Research conducted in Florida by Sharma (2007) and in New York by Moore (2006) revealed that, even though teachers were conscious that they were responsible for linking and incorporating the knowledge that children bring to the classroom into their instructions in order to provide equal opportunities to learn to all, they found it difficult to teach diverse students in the classrooms. This aspect is explored in the present study.

Gay (2002) conducted a study in New York and found that many students of colour are unfairly dispersed to special education because teachers lack knowledge about their cultural values and socialisation, and how these affect learning behaviours. Teachers of ethnically diverse students in New York confused diversity with disability because some of the perceived attitudes, values and behaviours of these students were derived from teachers' misunderstandings when comparing their home and school cultural standards, rather than them being due to some biological malfunctions or intellectual limitations (Gay, 2002).

Preservice teachers in the Midwest, USA, were considered successful in their abilities to implement the practices of culturally responsive teaching (Siwatu, 2007). A study conducted by Brown (2003) in seven cities in the USA established that teachers who participated in the study used numerous culturally responsive strategies – such as demonstrating care for students, acting with authority and assertiveness, and using congruent communication patterns to create a productive learning environment for their diverse students. Similarly, Bondy, Ross, Galligane and Hambacher (2007) in their research in Florida, USA, found that the novice teachers focused on developing relationships and establishing hope through the use of perseverance and culturally responsive communication styles. Bondy *et al.* (2007) revealed that the novice teachers in Florida created conducive environments for success and resilience for students who had historically floundered in school.

In a research conducted by Sleeter (2001) in Indiana, USA, it was observed that the majority of preservice White student teachers brought very little cross-cultural background, knowledge, and experience into diverse racial classrooms. These student teachers did not understand how to teach racially diverse learners as they revealed little awareness or understanding of discrimination, especially racism. Similarly, Walker-Dalhouse and Dalhouse (2006) conducted a research in Wisconsin, USA, and found that White preservice teachers believed that students should be identified by ethnic groups and that teachers should work with students and parents whose cultures are different from theirs. The results further show that these teachers were less likely to accept ethnic jokes and phrases and were more accepting of the idea that job assignments in the classroom should be rotated equally, thereby allowing each student the opportunity of performing classroom tasks. In addition, Walker-Dalhouse and Dalhouse (2006) observed that student teachers of colour in Wisconsin tended to bring richer experiences and perspectives to multicultural teaching than did most White student teachers who dominated them numerically. Research conducted in California by Sleeter (2001) further revealed that a large percentage of teachers of colour had been prepared by historically black institutions, hence they were knowledgeable about multicultural teaching compared to their White counterparts. The present study also looked at whether or not teachers are prepared to teach racially diverse learners and what implications this has on the provision of equal opportunities to learn.

Terry and Irving (2010) contend that diversity presents a unique challenge for educators, especially in the areas of assessment, instruction, and socialisation. Terry and Irving (2010) further stated that, if dissimilarities in culture or language are not attended to during the administration and interpretation of assessments or when selecting instructional strategies and social activities, then the result may be academic failure, social isolation, inappropriate referral of learners to special education, or inadequate special education services for learners who are culturally or linguistically different. This implies that some teachers unjustly label students whose cultures were mismatched with the mainstream culture of the school and classroom as having mental disability, while those teachers who utilised culturally responsive teaching discovered it as a remedy to meet the needs of all students in the classroom.

Studies on the teaching practices in racially diverse classrooms in the USA have revealed that inquiry based instructional intervention promoted the students' ability to conduct scientific inquiry irrespective of grade, achievement, gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, home language, and English proficiency (Cuevas, Lee, Hart & Deaktor 2005; Lee, Deaktor, Hart, Cuevas & Enders, 2005). In particular, Cuevas *et al.*'s (2005) study conducted in California demonstrated that low-achieving and low socioeconomic status students made impressive gains through inquiry based instructional intervention. Lee *et al.* (2005) found that instructional intervention helped to narrow the achievement disparity on science and literacy of fourth grade than third grade students in schools in California. White (2003), when examining how teachers in Georgia used classroom discourse to teach mathematics, discovered that teachers focused on developing students' mathematical competence and independent thinking. Teachers encouraged students to solve problems creatively and resourcefully, thereby developing their students' problem-solving abilities and basic computational skills (*ibid.*). These findings are aligned with Cahnmann and Remillard's (2002) observations in Pennsylvania that the teachers in their study held high expectations of their students, were highly committed to making mathematics meaningful and accessible to all students and employed practices that they believed to be relevant to their students' experiences.

According to Gresalfi, Hand and Hodge (2006), classroom discourse presented students with opportunities to make their thinking and mathematical skills public, thereby creating opportunities for revision and contributing to a shared purpose and a sense of community in supporting everyone's learning. In their study done in Connecticut, Casa and DeFranco (2003) observed that teachers incorporated rich mathematical tasks that provided students with opportunities to do and discuss mathematical ideas and concepts. Likewise, in a study in California, Leonard and Hill (2008) found that culturally relevant textbooks engaged students and teachers in high levels of classroom discourse that is rich in science content. Pryor and Bitter (2008) conducted a research in Arizona in the USA and established that using multimedia (e.g., video lesson modelling) helped teachers to improve their practices by providing opportunities to reflect recursively and collaboratively on strategies useful in classroom discourse. Bartley (2007) also carried out a study in California in the USA and found that caring teachers regard each student as an individual and sought to teach each student with the care most suitable to them. Howard (2001) observed in Columbus that African-American students preferred teachers who displayed the caring bonds and attitudes towards them and who made learning an entertaining and fun process. In other words, these students preferred culturally relevant teachers who are able to incorporate aspects of their cultural resources into their pedagogical practice in order to expand their epistemological access.

White (2003), Leonard and Hill (2008), Cuevas *et al.* (2005), Lee *et.al.* (2005) and Pryor and Bitter (2008) carried out respective studies in USA and found that instructional intervention, classroom discourse, culturally responsive teaching, culturally relevant textbooks and multimedia helped teachers to create the environment whereby students felt that they were members of the classroom who were being taken care of, loved and respected by their teachers, irrespective of their cultural backgrounds. The instructional practices used assisted teachers to view all students as having potential and resources (prior knowledge) for learning, notwithstanding their racial backgrounds. Howard (2001) and Bartley (2007) conducted studies in Columbus in the USA and found that compassionate teachers made learning interesting and exciting for students from mixed racial backgrounds.

Brand and Glasson (2004) undertook an ethnographic study in California, USA, and found that life experiences and racial and ethnic identity influenced the values of the pre-service teachers, shaping their views on diversity and science teaching. In another study that was conducted in Washington, USA, Dee and Henkin (2002) found that pre-service teachers strongly supported implementation of diversity issues in the classroom, and they indicated high levels of agreement with equity beliefs and the social value of diversity. However, Dagkas (2007) conducted a study in Spain and found that novice teachers had a limited knowledge of their students' culture and religion. Dagkas (2007) also found that beginner teachers with modest cultural knowledge faced difficulties in teaching students from culturally diverse backgrounds.

In their study conducted in Charlotte-Mecklenburg schools in California, Southworth and Mickelson (2007) found that racially balanced schools were more inclusive and thus they offered greater equality of educational opportunities for students from all backgrounds. Lucas and Berends (2002) have done a study in California and observed that socio-economic and racial diversity are associated with higher levels of the de facto ability tracking in Maths/English in public schools than in private schools. In another study that was carried out in California, Lucas and Berends (2002) found that schools differ in the way they treat comparable students of different races. For instance, they found that in some schools in California Black students were advantaged in comparison with Whites, whereas in other schools, Black students were disadvantaged, and that this school level distinction is related to visible characteristics of schools. They also argued that cognitively and socio-economically comparable Black students in diverse schools in California were more likely to be placed in lower tracks than were Whites. Bazron, Osher, and Fleischman (2005) suggested that schools can serve students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds better if they set high expectations and provide a scaffold of support, rather tracking them into low-level classes; give students direct instruction in the hidden curriculum of the school; create environments that allow students and teachers to connect with one another; and help build classroom communities. Though the present study does not intend to compare desegregated and segregated schools in terms of the provision of equal opportunities to learn, the studies conducted by Southworth and Mickelson (2007) and Lucas and Berends (2002) serve as a



background to the present study as it explored the South African classrooms with regard to the provision of equal opportunities to learn who come from racially racial backgrounds.

In the USA, there are different aspects that influence teachers' perceptions about the nature of science and teaching science in diverse classrooms. The literature above (Lucas & Berends, 2002; Bazron, *et al.*, 2005; Southworth & Mickelson, 2007) reveals that, while teachers believe that students should be treated equally in the classrooms regardless of racial and cultural backgrounds, they find it difficult to teach racially diverse students. It is clear that desegregated schools have improved in providing equal opportunities to learn for all students compared to segregated minority schools (Lucas & Berends, 2002). It is also apparent that ability tracking is still practiced in public schools compared to private schools in USA (Lucas & Berends, 2002; Bazron, *et al.*, 2005).

From the above literature, it is evident that, although teachers are willing to address issues of diversity in their classrooms, they find it challenging to deal with students from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds due to lack of pre- or in-service training (Leo & Barton, 2006; Moore, 2006; Dagkas 2007; Sharma 2007). The above literature also revealed that, if students' prior-knowledge was connected with the classroom expectations or the new learning in the classroom, then they were likely to benefit from the classroom instruction. However, if there was a disconnection between the students' previous knowledge and classroom learning, students were likely to lose learning opportunities (Lee, 2004; Lee, 2005). Literature strongly points out that equitable instruction assists students to link up their cultural norms with classroom expectations (Bianchini & Solomon, 2003). It suggests that subject matters should be related to equity issues to make them interesting and understandable to their students (Lee, 2001; Bianchini & Solomon, 2003; Lee, 2003; Lee, 2004; Lee, 2005).

When teachers share similar components of the language and culture as their students, students learn better because they discuss and interact in a culturally harmonious way (Lee,

2001 & 2003). Differences between student and teachers' cultures and languages lead to diverse treatment and misevaluation of culturally and linguistically diverse students (Lee, 2001; Gay 2002; Lee, 2003; Lee, 2004; Lee, 2005; Olson 2007; Barletta 2008). There are also well-documented and relatively simple instructional strategies that improve diverse students' learning opportunities and increase their academic achievement – namely, culturally responsive teaching, instructional congruence, inquiry-based instructional intervention, and classrooms discourse (Landson & Billings, 2001; Gay 2002; Leonard & Hill, 2008; Villegas & Lucas, 2002; Lee, 2003; White, 2003; Cuevas *et al.*, 2005; Lee *et al.*, 2005; Gresalfi, 2006; Siwatu, 2007). Other studies reported that racially balanced schools offer equality of educational opportunities for students from all backgrounds (Southworth & Mickelson (2007).

A study conducted by Dei (1996) examined the new ways of thinking about antiracism praxis in multiracial contexts in the USA. Antiracism is defined as an action-oriented strategy for institutional systemic change that addresses racism and other intertwining systems of social oppression (*ibid.*). Antiracism is a critical discourse of race and racism in society that challenges the continuation of racialising social groups for differential and unequal treatment. It questions the marginalisation of certain voices in society and the delegitimization or devaluation of the knowledge and experiences of the subordinate or minority groups. Thus, antiracism is aimed at disrupting hegemonic texts and curricular and instructional practices of official school pedagogy as well as their roles and functions in stabilising knowledge (Dei, 1999). I agree with the idea of the implementation of an antiracism praxis as it assists in eradicating inequality in institutions such as, schools, churches and workplaces (Dei, 1996; 1999). The implementation of antiracism will help bring about a social system that is all-encompassing and capable of responding to minority or subordinate concerns and ambitions. The antiracism praxis will assist in ensuring equal treatment of all people and the importance of their knowledges in the various societal institutions.

### 2.3 Opportunities to learn (OTL): The South African scenario

The focus of the literature discussed in this section is on variability **across classes** with different socio-economic status. However, the literature is silent about variability within the classroom, that is, how equal opportunities to learn are provided **within a racially diverse classroom**. In fact, the literature is silent about the racial, contextual, socio-economic, political, cultural and linguistic differences that are significant factors in the provision of equal learning opportunities to students.

Opportunity to learn (OTL) is described as a four-dimensional construct – comprising of content coverage, content exposure, curricular coherence and curricular pacing (Reeves, 2006). OTL and pedagogical factors as well as the differences in home background and other inequalities outside the classroom affect students' achievement gain (*ibid.*). As an example, Grade 6 learners in primary schools in the Western Cape Province spend more time on mathematics sub-topics that they were expected to have covered in the previous grade than they do at the level for their grade (Reeves & Muller, 2005). According to findings, there is a slow curricular rapidity or pacing across Grades 5 and 6 and learners are studying topics lower than grade level anticipations. It was also observed that learners in different classes and different schools in Gauteng Province did not have equal opportunities to learn. Some of the learners in schools in Gauteng Province had unqualified teachers, specifically in schools with limited resources or in poorly managed schools (Stols, 2013). Such factors may contribute towards poor academic performance by learners (*ibid.*).

Reeves (1999) conducted a study in schools in the Western Cape Province and found that teachers who participated in the study differed in the manner in which they taught Mathematics. The study revealed that one teacher's use of real-life context in instructing mathematics hindered learners' conceptual development and the development of a conceptual language of mathematics. However, this might have been due to the fact that it was a real-life context for the teacher and not for the learners, who then had to grapple with the added unfamiliarity to the context as well as articulating the new mathematical concepts.

In contrast, another teacher's lesson was subject-focused, and she succeeded in engaging learners with the mathematics learning outcome of understanding and performing the basic operation of addition.

Carnoy, Chisholm, Arends, Baloyi, Kivilu and Winaar (2008) conducted a study in schools in Gauteng and Northwest Provinces and found that teacher capacity (content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge) was unequally distributed across schools catering for learners of lower and higher socio-economic background. They observed that learners in Gauteng and Northwest who were disadvantaged academically in terms of family resources were instructed by teachers with less capacity to instruct mathematical understanding in the classroom. According to Reeves and Major (2012), developing countries such as Botswana and South Africa differ in terms of the provision of students' opportunity to learn. They conducted a case study of two countries (Botswana and South Africa) and used students' notebooks to measure what goes on in Grade 6 classrooms with regard to not only the number of mathematics lessons educators teach (a time on task variable) but also on the content they cover in those lessons. In sample classes in both studies, their findings revealed that most educators were giving an average number of mathematics lessons that were considerably lower than the number officially programmed under each country's ministry guidelines. Stols (2013) conducted a quantitative study in schools in Gauteng Province to investigate the opportunities to learn that were available to grade 12 mathematics learners. The study used documents such as Grade 12 learners' workbooks, with the assumption that the best workbooks selected by the educators would have all the class and homework activities that educators gave to learners (*ibid.*). The best workbooks were expected to display learning opportunities in relation to time-on-task, curriculum coverage, coherence, and level of cognitive demand as established by the educator (*ibid.*). Stols (2013) found that sixteen out of eighteen schools in Gauteng Province did not provide adequate opportunities to learn for their learners. The findings further revealed that only two out of eighteen schools studied in Gauteng Province managed to prepare more than 30% of their learners for science-related careers. The study concluded that the reasons for lack of OTL in South African classrooms were probably be due to educators' lack of content knowledge (*ibid.*).

The former President of South Africa, Honourable Mr Jacob Zuma, viewed the issue of teaching and learning time as a very important factor for learners at school. In his tenure as the president of the country from 2009 – 2017 he emphasised the issue of time. For example, he indicated that the teacher should be in class, on time, teaching for seven hours a day and children should be in class on time learning (State of the Nation Address (SoNA), 2009 – 2017). This suggested that teaching and learning in South African schools should begin on time and that all learners were to be provided with equal opportunities to learn. In a study done in Gauteng Province, Stols (2013) found that teachers spent time on Grade 12 mathematical topics that tended to be procedural such as, amongst others, logarithms, sequences and series, and that teachers avoided topics that required understanding and problem solving. Stols (2013) found that learners were not provided with enough opportunities to learn Mathematics in their classrooms (*ibid.*). Stols (2013) argued that the school day and classroom activities must be arranged to make the best use of time on task. She also proposed that there was a need to focus on the effective use of time, efficient teaching methods and the choice of learning activities in order for learners to understand the content of the subjects and improve their academic performance (*ibid.*).

Lemmer (2007) conducted observations in schools in all the nine provinces of South Africa and concluded that a good school, family and community partnership led to improved academic learner performance, high self-esteem, school attendance and social behaviour. In addition, Lemmer (2007) found that parents and educators experienced mutual support and satisfaction in achieving positive changes in children and the school. According to Lemmer (2007), opportunities to learn in high performing schools were higher since they had sufficient Learner Teacher Support Materials (LTSMs) and parents were actively involved in the education of their children in comparison with poor performing schools (*ibid.*). The Gauteng Provincial Legislature (GPL) (2010), through its *Bua Le Sechaba* (talk to the nation) campaign project conducted a study in public schools in West Rand in Gauteng Province and found that in high performing schools there were sufficient resources for teaching and learning, learners had access to learning resources, parental involvement was high, and learners' academic performance was good compared to poor performing schools.

Literature indicates that there are few empirical studies on OTL conducted in developing countries, and these have been done mainly in the South African context (Reeves & Muller, 2005; Reeves, 2006). Some OTL studies that have been conducted in African countries, particularly in South Africa (Reeves & Muller, 2005; Reeves, 2006), focused mainly on schools serving learners who come from low socio-economic status (SES), while others (Lemmer, 2007; Carnoy, *et al.*, 2008; GPL, 2010) focused on both high SES and low SES schools, without taking into consideration the manner in which teachers impart knowledge to learners of diverse racial backgrounds. Moreover, these OTL studies (Reeves & Muller, 2005; Stols, 2013) paid attention to Grades 5 and 6 as well as Grade 12 mathematics classrooms and they used surveys and mixed methods to study classroom processes. Their findings have shown that OTL, SES, and pedagogical factors have an influence on learners' achievements. My study differs from other OTL studies conducted in South Africa in that it sought to explore whether or not teachers provide equal opportunities to learn in schools serving racially diverse learners.

### **2.3 Racial diversity in education in South Africa**

At the national level in South Africa, there is a growing concern about the success or failure of the education department's stated ambition of ensuring racial integration at school level. For instance, Phatlane (2007) explored the experiences of learners of desegregation in Pretoria, Gauteng Province and found that learners have crossed the racial segregation line and have realised that they cannot exist independently from one another anymore. In their study that was conducted in rural schools in Eastern Cape, Fox, Vos and Geldenhuys (2007) observed that cross-cultural peer teaching helps learners to grow in understanding the content of the subject and sensitivity towards people from different cultural, racial and socio-economic groups. Machaisa (2004), who also investigated the experiences and feelings of learners about the process of racial integration in their schools in Pretoria, Gauteng Province, found that racial integration differs across schools. Some schools managed to practice racial integration while other schools were sluggish in putting it into practice. Hemson (2006) conducted a study of South African schools and found that diversity was seen by policy makers as a problem that needed to be evaded rather than explored, contested and drawn into the

curriculum. While Phatlane (2007) and Machaisa (2004) studied the experiences of learners on diversity and desegregation, I, on the other hand, decided to explore the experiences of teachers teaching learners who come from racially and culturally diverse backgrounds and whether or not they provide these learners with equal opportunities to learn.

According to Orfield (2004), diversity promotes learning outcomes and it prepares students for an increasingly diverse workforce and society. The challenge is that primary and secondary school educators have not been adequately prepared to meet the challenges confronting them in the increasingly multicultural schools in which they are teaching (Mentz & van der Walt, 2007). Mentz and van der Walt (2007) maintain that, in schools that are desegregated, learners find pleasure in racial integration, are sensitive towards people of different cultural and racial backgrounds and are more attached to one another notwithstanding culture and race. It is apparent that diversity supports and promotes students' learning. However, it is also evident that dealing with diversity is a challenge because teachers have not been sufficiently trained to deal with it in their schools.

Moletsane, Hemson and Muthukrishna (2004) argue that true school integration, which promotes equality of access to knowledge and of educational opportunities for all, is still poorly conceived in most school contexts in South Africa. The findings from a study conducted in former White schools in South Africa by Moletsane *et al.* (2004) revealed that, during classroom activities, teachers were unconsciously sustaining discrimination by separating learners according to their cultural groups and, thus perpetuating cultural tags. Vandeyar and Killen (2006) observed in schools in Gauteng Province that authority was decentralized to learners along racial lines, marginalizing the disadvantaged students. The above studies serve as a background to my study since my study intends to investigate what goes on in the classrooms in terms of the provision of equal opportunities to learn to racially and culturally diverse learners.

Nkomo and Vandeyar (2008) observed that the personality of teachers plays a significant role in encouraging learners to express themselves overtly without fear of being laughed at in schools in Gauteng Province. They also discovered that learners themselves found learning to be meaningful and exciting when the teacher incorporated their social worlds into the lesson. Carignan, Pourdavood, King and Feza (2005) argue that if ethnic/cultural diversity does not exist in a homogeneous classroom then diversity should be clearly demonstrated in the materials and textbooks associated with all subject areas, as well as pedagogical strategies. However, in relation to this aspect, Carolyn McKinney (2005) has reported that the Grade 1 textbooks in South Africa provided almost no opportunities to address racism, sexism, poverty, disability or other forms of social exclusion. They observed that representations of gender, race, social class and rural/urban location (but not disability) were generally better in Grade 7 Natural Science textbooks, though they were still in need of improvement.

In a research entitled *“Responses of South African teachers to the challenge of school integration”*, Vandeyar (2010) examined how educators respond to the challenge of school desegregation and to what extent the attitude of these schools has been transformed towards integration in the real sense. Vandeyar (2010) conducted case studies of eighteen educators working in diverse South African classrooms. The study was conducted in six primary and five schools in three provinces in South Africa. The findings of her study revealed that most of the classrooms were either decorated with learners’ work on a specific theme or posters that were a reminder of the former schooling period depending on the race group the school was serving. Vandeyar (2010) also found that, in one classroom, the walls were decorated with commercially produced posters that addressed diversity. Chisholm (2008) conducted a study in five schools in Gauteng Province and found that some schools practice a kinder of integration, yet on the other hand they expected learners to adapt to the cultural norms and practices of the schools that were established under apartheid. Chisholm (2008) further maintained that these schools expected learners to abide by their rules and regulations, which often included hidden forms of discrimination against learners who did not share the school’s linguistic, class and/or cultural norms. Research conducted in Gauteng Province by Pillay (2004) on a desegregated Indian school in South Africa found that discrimination was practiced by both Indian educators and learners against black learners in



the school. Vandeyar's (2010) study informs the present study as it sought to investigate what goes on in the South African classrooms in terms of the provision of equal opportunities to learn who come from diverse racial backgrounds.

The democratic South African government made provisions for the amalgamation of schools, revision of curricula and textbooks and the renewal of support structures in the management of the country's education (Meier & Hartell, 2009). Nevertheless, South Africa, with its culturally diverse society, desegregation and changes in educational systems and educational institutions, brought great challenges for educators. This has been due to increased diversity of the learner population and curricula change among other factors (Meier & Hartell, 2009). Multicultural school spaces are considered to provide distinctive opportunities for South African youth to engage with difference, challenge prejudice and build friendships and trust. However, in the South African context, racial discourse and racial discrimination still remain (Fleetwood, 2012). Findings of research conducted in schools in Mpumalanga and Kwa-Zulu Natal by Fleetwood (2012) revealed that South Africa is not amalgamated because racial cohesion among South Africans is low. Factors such as pervasiveness of racial consciousness in South Africa, with its origin in the country's apartheid history, and the influence of the older generations on young people's attitudes and experiences are contributors to this aspect (*ibid.*). In terms of persistence of racial consciousness, Fleetwood (2012) observed that race is the main obstacle that hinders union among South Africans. Many older South Africans were found to be still inundated with a variety of negative emotions such as anger, fear and denial, which inhibit national synchronisation (Fleetwood, 2012). Fleetwood's research revealed that racial prejudice continued to consume the minds and motives of the current government (*ibid.*). This indicates that South Africa still has a long way to go in terms of ensuring that there is unity among South Africans.

In accordance with the above literature, it is evident that a larger number of learners from formerly underprivileged schools now go to racially desegregated schools. Also, the behaviour of some teachers was reported as being significant in supporting students' desegregated learning (Nkomo & Vandeyar, 2008). However, there was evidence that low SES classes were less represented in the textbooks (*ibid.*). There was also gender discrimination and

stereotyping evident in the Foundation Phase textbooks compared to the Senior Phase texts (McKinney, 2005). In view of these findings, the present study investigated the manner in which the classroom environment, textbooks and teaching instruction reflect and symbolise all learners despite their racial backgrounds.

In summing up, the reviewed national literature focused on how schools in South Africa are racially integrated, how textbooks symbolise diversity, and the manner in which teachers deal with diversity in their classrooms. The findings indicated that, even though some schools have become racially integrated and learners benefit from racial mixing (Machaisa, 2004; Orfield, 2004; Phatlane, 2007), racial lines were still observable in the classrooms during teaching and learning (Jansen, 2004; Moletsane *et al.*, 2004; Vandeyar & Killen, 2006). In other words, in some school teachers still reinforced racial discrimination and disparities in their classrooms. Further, Mentz and van der Walt (2007) found that teachers were less prepared to teach learners from diverse backgrounds. Primary school textbooks do not completely represent diversity as there were some aspect of diversity which were not signified in the textbooks (McKinney, 2005). I therefore argue that, if racial diversity is not addressed in the textbooks, there is a possibility that students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds may have limited access to knowledge and opportunities to learn. These findings informed the present study as it looked at whether or not racially diverse learners are provided with equal opportunities to learn.

## **2.4 Comparison of findings between international and national perspectives**

The international and national perspectives on OTL reveal similarities as most of them conceptualized OTL in terms of curriculum, content coverage, content exposure, instructional resources and practices (Stevens, 1993; 1996; 1997; Herman *et al.*, 2000; Reeves, 2006). Another connection between these two bodies of literature is that they mostly studied OTL in areas of Mathematics, Science and English, comparing high SES and low SES learners on how they were afforded with opportunities to learn. In the USA, studies revealed that the achievement gap between high SES and low SES, and between English learners and native

English speakers is widening because OTL in Maths, Science and English were distributed differently between students of different backgrounds. High SES and native English speakers were provided with better OTL compared to low SES and limited English proficient students. This suggests that low SES and non-English speakers' access to knowledge and opportunities to learn are limited, resulting in poor academic performance (Wang & Goldschmidt, 1999; Huang, 2002; Herman & Abedi, 2004; Abedi *et al.*, 2006; Flores, 2007).

In South Africa, research findings revealed that students with low abilities were more likely to be taught by low pedagogical content knowledge teachers compared to students with high abilities (Carnoy *et al.*, 2008). They further revealed that high SES and low SES students do not receive equal OTL. Broadly, OTL, pedagogical factors and home background affect students' achievement (Reeves, 2006). Similarly, international studies also revealed that low performing students had fewer opportunities to learn as they were taught a less detailed curriculum content and were taught by less qualified teachers (Wang 1998; Snow-Renner, 2001; Callan, 2005; Cooper & Liou, 2007; Kner *et al.*, 2007). Reeves and Muller (2005) observed in schools in the Western Cape Province that students from low socio-economic conditions lagged behind because they learnt mathematical subjects that should have been learnt in the previous grades. Similarly, an international study conducted by Cueto, Ramirez, and Leon (2006) showed that low SES students were taught few mathematical exercises, which were of very low levels of cognitive demands, and they did not receive feedback on the work they had done. While some of the international studies investigated the use of mathematics textbooks in different countries and how they provide students with opportunities to learn (Haggard & Pepin, 2002), there were few studies in South Africa that analysed textbooks in order to scrutinise whether or not they were intended for racially diverse classrooms. This is what the present study investigated.

## **2.5 Conclusion**

The international and national literature on the provision of equal opportunities in racially diverse classrooms revealed similarity in terms of the findings reported. For instance, a South

African research conducted by Nkomo and Vandeyar (2008) and international studies done by Brown (2003) and Bartley (2007) revealed that the character of teachers and the incorporation of students' social worlds into the lesson played a remarkable role in producing a favourable atmosphere for students to learn. International studies (Land-Billings, 2001; Gay, 2002; Villegas & Lucas, 2002; Brown, 2003; Lee, 2003;2004; 2005; Bondy *et al.*, 2007; Luykx & Lee, 2007; Siwatu, 2007) demonstrated that the use of culturally responsive strategies such as care for students, perseverance and culturally communication styles seemed to work well in providing supportive instruction for students from diverse racial and cultural backgrounds.

What also emerged as a similarity between these two bodies of literature was that both focused on the experiences and attitudes of teachers towards racial diversity and racial integration, but they differed in terms of sampling. The international studies (Dee & Henkin, 2002; Walker-Dalhouse & Dalhouse, 2006; Bartley, 2007) done in the Unites States explored pre-service teachers' thoughts and feelings about racial diversity and inclusive education, while the South African literature (Moletsane *et al.*, 2004; Mentz & van der Walt, 2007) explored whether teachers were prepared to teach racially diverse classrooms. The findings in both national and international literature revealed that teachers found it challenging to teach in racially diverse classrooms because they had not been prepared to teach learners who come from diverse racial backgrounds. Some of the national and international findings revealed that pre-service teachers were positive about the implementation of issues of racial diversity in their classrooms and they preferred to be familiar with students' cultural groups (Walker-Dalhouse & Dalhouse, 2006; Dee & Henkin, 2002). Other national and international findings indicated that teachers lack knowledge and understanding of their diverse students' cultural backgrounds and they therefore found it challenging to teach racially diverse students (Leo & Barton, 2006; Moore, 2006; Suban & Sharma, 2006; Dagkas, 2007; Fox *et al.*, 2007). What seemed to be a major difference was that most of the international studies on diversity focused on areas of maths, science and literacy (Lee, 2001; 2005; Luykx & Lee, 2007; Siwatu, 2007), whereas local studies in South Africa looked at the manner in which diversity is represented in schools, classrooms and within textbooks (Machaisa, 2004; Moletsane *et al.*, 2004; McKinney 2005; Vandeyar & Killen, 2006; Phatlane; 2007; Nkomo & Vandeyar, 2008).

To date, little research attention has been paid to whether or not teachers provide students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds with equal opportunities to learn in the South African context. Prior research has not carefully considered the provision of equal opportunities to learn in racially diverse classrooms. This is the problem I explored in this study. In the next chapter I discuss the conceptual and theoretical framework upon which this study rests.

## **CHAPTER THREE: THE CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### 3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I will look at the applicable theories and concepts relevant to my study. I adopted the meta-theory of Critical Realism. To support the meta-theory, I employed Margaret Archer's Social Realist Morphogenesis/Morphostasis approach (1995) as a theoretical framework to help me outline power/knowledge relations and their influence on the provision of equal opportunities to learn in racially diverse classrooms prior to democracy and also during the period of this study. Critical Realism is defined by Archer (1995, 1996 & 2000) as an underpinning philosophy of Social Realism. Archer's Morphogenesis/Morphostatis framework (Archer, 1995) is used as an analytical lens to help me understand whether or not the school structure, culture and agency have been transformed or reproduced after democracy in terms of the provision of equal opportunities to learn for racially diverse learners. Archer's (1995) Social Realism adopts a methodological approach to exploring the social phenomenon and takes into consideration the three realms of structure, culture and agency. This methodological approach, articulated through Archer's conception of 'analytical dualism', maintains that although these three realms are entangled with each other, they need to be explored independently for analytical purposes in order to understand their interaction (Archer, 1995; Layton, 2012). This study is in the area of the provision of basic education in multiracial schools and uses the Social Realist theory to understand the policies, rules, and practices that were driving the participating multiracial school during the apartheid era and the policies, rules, and practices that were implemented by the school after 1994. One intention of this study was to contribute towards proposing a theoretical framework that might inform research on the provision of equal opportunities to learn in racially diverse classrooms. Concern has been articulated that research on racial diversity and opportunities to learn are likely to overlook issues of structure, culture and agency (Oakes & Lipton, 1990; Stevens, 1993; Gay, 2000; Stein, 2000; Lee, 2001; White, 2003).

There is a need to develop knowledge and understanding about the interaction between structure/culture (school structures/cultures and systems) and agency (of school principal, teachers and learners). Methodologically, this study will contribute to the body of research that exists currently which utilises the Morphogenetic/Morphostasis framework (Archer,

1995). This study also aimed at adding to the understanding of the interaction between the structure, culture (systems) and agency in a multiracial school with regard to providing racially diverse learners with equal opportunities to learn. A clarification of the ontological and epistemological understandings that reinforce this study is significant in informing the basis upon which knowledge assertions are emphasised. Archer (1995) states that the manner in which we comprehend society affects how we study it. I shall firstly clarify the Critical Realist underpinnings of Archer's Social Realist approach and thereafter I shall explain features of Morphogenesis/Morphostasis.

### **3.2 Critical Realism**

The principles of Critical Realism are that social systems are essentially open and cannot be artificially closed; thus, empiric testing of theories cannot be predictive and must be exclusively explanatory. In addition, social theory and social reality are causally inter-reliant, which implies that social theory is non-neutral, being affected by and caused by social values and actions (Bhaskar, 1989). Critical Realism contends that acquiring knowledge about the external world does not depend only on the human mind or subjectivity (Parpio, Malik, Punjani & Farooq, 2013). It maintains that there exists a reality independent of our knowledge of it. However, Critical Realism acknowledges that our knowledge of reality is subject to all kinds of historical and other influences (Bhaskar, 1991). This theory, originally developed by Roy Bhaskar (1975), explains the ontological and epistemological centres for developing knowledge about the world from a realist perspective. It holds ontological and epistemological components which indicate what structures, objects and mechanisms frame the social world. The concepts underpinning the theory of Critical Realism are discussed in detail below.

#### **3.2.1 Critical realist ontology**

A realist ontology upholds that the world is made up of structures and objects that have cause-effect relationships with one another. It argues that knowledge (epistemology) is



different from being or existence (Willig, 2001). Humankind, in their social activities, generate knowledge, which is a social product, while there is a knowledge of things which are not generated by humankind at all (Bhaskar, 2008). Thus, the social world can be understood only if people know the structures that create them. According to this theory, a person carrying out a research study generates the conditions which are essential (observable events); however, the results are produced by the underlying laws and mechanisms (unobservable structures). Critical Realism needs an in-depth understanding of any social situation, going beyond the observable and investigating the underlying mechanisms (structures or causes) behind any incident (Bhaskar, 1978; 1998). In order to develop this knowledge, it requires the researcher to understand that reality is differentiated, structured and stratified (Archer, 1995; Bhaskar, 2008). I found this theory to be relevant to the present study as it assisted me to investigate the basic education policies, rules, systems and practices that were used by the participating school during the apartheid regime and those that are utilised after the apartheid system, and the implications of these on the provision of equal opportunities to learn in racially diverse classes.

Critical Realism considers understanding the connection between reality and our knowledge about it and it includes three ontologically unique, stratified levels of reality known as the real, the actual and the empirical (Bhaskar, 1978). These three levels of reality are discussed below:

- ***The layer of the real***

The 'real' refers to those underlying objects, structures, mechanisms, events and powers which exist (Bhaskar, 1978). These underlying objects, structures, mechanisms, events and powers are able to generate incidents in the world. The strata of the real is perceived as being an intransitive ontological aspect. This is because the causal objects, structures and mechanisms sustain and act autonomously of human minds. This intransitive aspect is quite static since it is produced by generative mechanisms that sustain it (Layton, 2012). The real's basis of causal laws is provided by the generative mechanisms of nature which are "nothing

other than the ways of acting of things” (Baskhar, 2008). Causal laws should be perceived as tendencies which are powers or responsibilities of an object which may be applied without being manifest in a specific outcome or actual events (*ibid.*). Knowledge is a social product generated by antecedent social products but the object of which, in the social activity of science and knowledge, comes to be produced, exist and act quite independently of humankind as thinkers, causal agents and perceivers (*ibid.*). In relation to the present study, the layer of real represents the school as a structure, the policies, rules, regulations, systems and practices that exist independent of the teachers, learners and school principal. The aim of the study is to uncover those underlying structures and mechanisms (policies, rules, regulations, systems) and their implications for the provision of equal opportunities to learn for all racially diverse learners.

- ***The layer of the actual***

The second layer of reality is the area of ‘actual’, which refers to events that can be experienced but which take place whether people are aware of them or not. The actual reality occurs when the causal powers of the real, which includes objects, their structures or natures and their contributory powers and responsibilities or generative mechanisms are stimulated (Fairclough, Jessop & Sayer, 2002; Bhaskar, 2008). This level of reality is termed the transitive dimension because objects are continually changing while at the layer of real, objects, structures and mechanisms are static and intransitive (Bhaskar, 2008; Layton, 2012). The purpose of the present study was to examine the relationship between the layer of the real (policies, systems, rules, and regulations) and the actual (teaching and learning), and whether the layer of real enables or constrains the actual provision of equal opportunities to learn in racially diverse classes.

- ***The layer of the empirical***

The final layer of reality is the 'empirical', the layer in which events or incidences are experienced through the sense perceptions and as a result the empirical is dependent upon the real and the actual layers. This layer is where incidents or aspects of reality are experienced directly or indirectly, and it is differentiated from the actual layer where incidents or aspects of reality occur whether or not we are able to experience or observe them (Parpio, *et al.*, 2013; Layton, 2012). Empirical realism is determined by the reduction of the real to the actual and of the actual to the empirical. In terms of Critical Realist ontology, the present study attempts to go beyond the common-sense ordinary and ascertain and discover the underlying structures and mechanisms from the layer of real (in the intransitive dimension), which are stimulated as causal powers generating occurrences at the layers of the actual and empirical (Bhaskar, 2008). The rationale behind using the Critical Realist approach is to uncover the core relationships and contributing mechanisms which cause the ways in which the society (multiracial school) is structured and operate.

### **3.2.2 Critical Realist epistemology**

A further basis of the Critical Realist epistemology is that people can never assert to know the world entirely; knowledge about the world is imperfect or can be rectified (Archer, 1995). The reason for the imperfect world is that knowledge about the world is notion reliant. The world can also be acknowledged and described only in terms of the notions that are accessible to people. The knowledge about the world can also be discovered through empirical research to unearth further essential causal elements that are identified at any particular time (Fair *et al.*, 2002; Vorster, 2010). In relation to the present study, the purpose was to find out the origin of the school, the policies, rules and practices that governed the school pre- and after democracy and their implications for the provision of equal opportunities to learn in racially diverse classes. The study also aimed to uncover the underlying causal forces, that is, structures, mechanisms and tendencies that are liable for generating these social occurrences. It attempted to examine the mechanisms that are enabling or restraining the

provision of equal opportunities to learn in racially diverse classes. I found it essential to begin from the empirical and the actual strata: where several incidents, social relations and interactions are noticeable and then to ask the question – what underlying structures and mechanisms must be there for these specific occurrences, relations and interactions to prevail? I found it crucial when interpreting the specific social context to be mindful of the ways in which numerous mechanisms act against each other and cooperate to allow the appearance of diverse perceivable effects or incidents.

### **3.3 A Social Realist approach**

This debate on Social Realism draws predominantly on Archer's works, namely: *Realist Social Theory: the morphogenetic approach* (1995) and *Culture and Agency: the place of culture in social theory* (1996). In order to strengthen the meta-theory of Critical Realism (Bhaskar, 1978), Archer (1995), a social scientist, established Social Realism, which argues that the three realms of structure, culture and agency should be considered when investigating the social world. A society is made up of structural, cultural and agential emergent properties (Archer, 1995 & 1996). Archer distinguishes the field of structure (i.e., the world out there) from the identical domains of structure and culture (*ibid.*). Structure refers to material goods unevenly disseminated across society and it is also the realm of social positions and roles. Culture refers to the world of ideas and beliefs and includes the world of propositional knowledge whereby two ideas can be put in an analytical relation with each other. Agency on the other hand is the realm of human action and collaboration (Archer, 1995; Case, 2015). The three areas even though knotted with each other should be investigated separately for the purpose of analysis (Archer, 1995; Layton, 2012). This, therefore, implies that it is crucial to disconnect structure and culture from the agency in order to examine their relationship (Archer, 1995; Layton, 2012).

In relation to the present study, the structure refers to a multiracial school and the governance structures, policies as well as the material resources that are available to enable or constrain the provision of equal opportunities for racially diverse learners to learn. Culture

represents the ideas, beliefs, norms, values, rules, regulations, and practices, etc. within the school and the implications of all these on the provision of equal opportunities to learn in racially diverse classes. Agency signifies the school principal, teachers and learners and their abilities to act within and upon their own world (school) with regard to their social roles and positions reliant on their ability to activate their emergent properties and powers.

There are internal and necessary relations between emergent properties (Archer, 1995 & 1996). Archer distinguishes between structural emergent properties, cultural emergent properties and agential emergent properties. Structural emergent properties (SEPs) depend predominantly on material resources, including people; cultural emergent properties (CEPs) which develop as ideas, beliefs, values, rules and so on become part of the cultural landscape (*ibid.*). Agential emergent properties (AEPs) come about as people interact in different contexts that require them to exercise different sets of powers as part of new groups or where individuals' interactions are challenged within the natural, practical or social realms of reality (*ibid.*). Emergent properties and powers can interact with each other and, in the process, produce yet new emergent properties. Thus, SEPs come into being and change through the influence of ideas which are of course CEPs held by agents. Thus, emergent properties come about, and emergent powers are exercised in the interplay between structure, culture and agency (*ibid.*).

Society is inseparable from its social components since the very survival of society is influenced by human activities (Archer, 1995). Society (school) is naturally changeable (Morphogenesis) or can be reproduced (Morphostasis); it has no unchangeable form or even a desired state (*ibid.*). In addition, as social agents are neither unchallengeable for what they are and what they do as social beings they are also affected by the society in which they live and by their very efforts to transform or reproduce it. In the present study, society refers to the multiracial primary school which is made up of agents, that is, the school principal, teachers, parents and learners. This implies that the existence of the school depends upon the activities of the staff members (principals, teachers, learners) and parents. It also suggests that the school by its nature is transformable or reproducible and the agents (school

principals, teachers, learners and parents) are also changeable or reproducible in what they are and what they perform (teachers as implementers of curriculum in the classrooms and school principal and parents as decision makers) and they are also influenced by the broader school community in which they work.

### **3.3.1 Morphogenesis/Morphostasis framework**

As indicated earlier, I used Archer's Morphogenetic/Morphostasis framework as a theoretical framework (Archer, 1995 & 1996) in this study. Social Realism argues that the task of empirical research in the social sciences is to explore social phenomena in order to uncover underlying causal processes. It provides a difference between people's knowledge about the world and the world which is the object of that knowledge. As already noted, Archer's (1995) social theory is called the Morphogenesis/Morphostasis approach. Morphogenesis/Morphostasis refers to change and continuity. In other words, Morphogenesis is a theory about change (-genesis) in the form of things (morpho-), that is, a change in social structure, culture, and agential change. Morphostasis refers to a situation where no change occurs, that is, it refers to those processes that tend to preserve or maintain a system's given form, organisation or state (Vorster, 2010; Case, 2015).

The morphogenetic cycle is an analytical framework which follows the sequence of time (Archer, 1995 & 1996). In the field of basic education, I essentially concentrated on the Morphogenesis/Morphostasis of one multiracial primary school (structure), its culture (the ways in which the school operates) and the agents (namely the school principal, teachers and racially diverse learners) over the transition from the apartheid era into the post-independence era. The aim of this study was to trace the origins of the school prior to democracy and the policies and practices that were driving the school then, and also after democracy, as well as the implications of these policies and practices on the provision of equal opportunities to learn in racially diverse classes. I considered the likelihood of systemic transformation/reproduction to support the structural and agential Morphogenesis/Morphostasis.

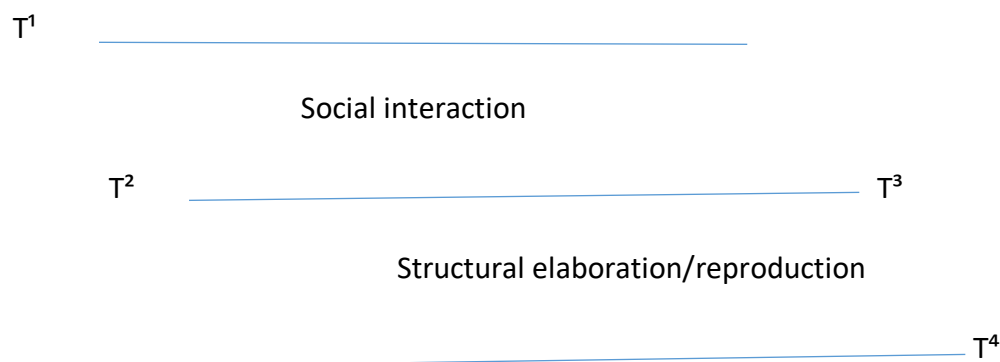
There are three different instants in the process of social change or reproduction (Archer, 1995). The first phase signifies the start of the process ( $T^1$ , where T represents time) (*ibid.*). Archer describes  $T^1$  as the structural or cultural context into which agents are born or which they come into. The agents do not choose this circumstance, but it is the context that conditions the actions of the agents (*ibid.*). In other words, the actions of the agents are not automatic but are conditioned by the situation in which they find themselves. Social relations take place during  $T^2$  to  $T^3$  (*ibid.*).  $T^2$  is the stage where social agents are able to have an effect on social circumstances within the restrictions or enablement offered through, amongst others, their entrusted interests, bargaining powers, and material conditions. This implies that change or reproduction arises from the social collaboration between the structural and social assimilation or contest (Archer, 1995; Lipscomb, 2014). The social collaboration of agents occurring between  $T^2$  and  $T^3$  is thereby structurally conditioned, but the ownership by agents of emergent preferential properties implies that actions are never structurally determined (Lipscomb, 2014).

Social or human interaction takes place in an environment that has been conditioned by the identical effects of structure and culture (Case, 2015). Social relations act to transform or preserve existing social objects, as well as leading to progression of new cultural, structural and individual forms (Priestley, 2011). Social or human interaction also occurs between  $T^2$  and  $T^3$  and is thus structurally conditioned. Between  $T^2$  and  $T^3$  agency exercises two distinct influences, that is, one time-based and the other guiding (Archer, 1995). It can accelerate, delay or hinder the eradication of previous structural influences. Interests, which give motives for actions, can be countless understood by agents (*ibid.*). The outcomes of a cycle of social or human collaboration gives rise to a new conditioning for further cycles of Morphogenesis or Morphostasis. In relation to the present study, I investigated whether *Arabia Primary School* (pseudonym) provides the space that constrains or enables teachers to provide equal opportunities to learn to learners in racially diverse classes.  $T^4$  symbolises the outcome of the social collaboration and it is the beginning of the new  $T^1$ , and hence creates the conditioning influences of the next cycle of Morphogenesis/Morphostasis.  $T^1$  to  $T^4$  describes an analytical history and at the end of this history  $T^4$  becomes  $T^1$  (of history 1) for a successor (history 2) cycle (Lipscomb, 2014).

Morphogenesis/Morphostasis consists of the character of a sequence which comprises of three phases, namely (a) structural or cultural conditioning, (b) social or cultural interaction, and (c) social or cultural elaboration or reproduction (Zeuner, 1999). The following Figures (1-3) reflects the influence of time across different phases of morphogenetic processes of structure, culture and agency:

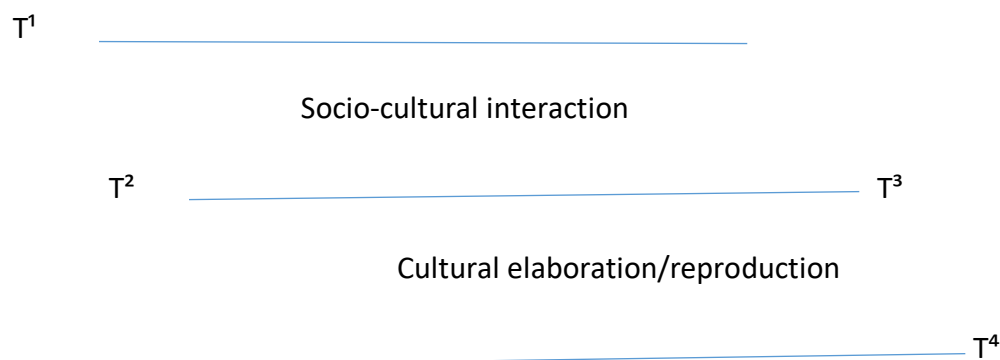
**Figure 1: The Morphogenesis/Morphostasis of structure (Archer, 1995:193)**

Structural conditioning



**Figure 2: The Morphogenesis//Morphostasis of culture (ibid.:193)**

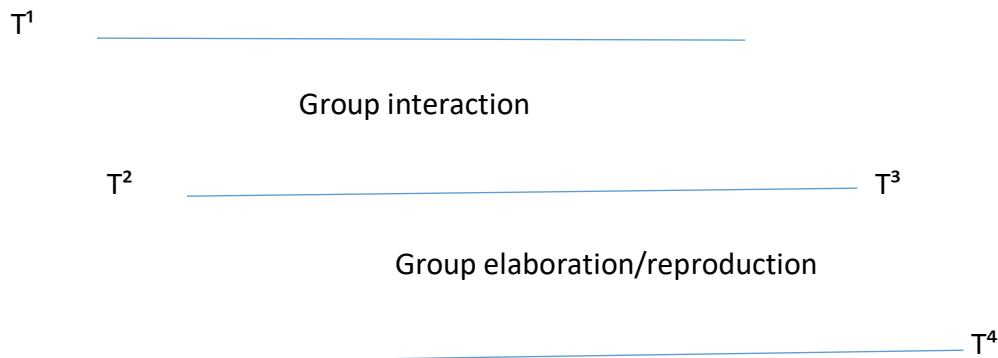
Cultural conditioning





**Figure 3: The Morphogenesis/Morphostasis of agency (*ibid.*:193)**

Socio-cultural conditioning of groups



With regard to structural elaboration or reproduction, Archer (1995) states that, if action of the agents is operational, then the change produced at T<sup>4</sup> is not simply the removal of a previous property and its substitution by a new one, but it is also the structural expansion of a multitude of new social possibilities, some of which will have slowly been acquired between T<sup>2</sup> and T<sup>4</sup>. At the same time, structural elaboration resumes a new morphogenetic cycle; it presents a new set of conditional influences upon collaboration which are restraining as well as enabling, and hence T<sup>4</sup> is the new T<sup>1</sup>. The present study is aimed at investigating whether the actions of the agents within the school (school principal, teachers and learners) have transformed or reproduced the school.

Structure and agency operate over different time periods. Particularly, the structure pre-dates the actions which transform it, and structural elaboration post-dates those actions (Archer, 1995). Social structures subsist and these structures that ontologically exist before do not depend on people working within them (*ibid.*). Social structures are impossible to reduce or to lessen by people who brought them about or the people who work within them. In the context of the present study, I accept that the participating multiracial primary school does not exist because of the principal, teachers and learners who are operative within it, but that it existed before they came to the school. Hence, Archer (1995) maintains that people or

agents are born into or enter into a pre-structured context. However, the actions of the agents can either transform or reproduce the structure.

Archer's concept of analytical dualism provides a methodological means of detaching (for analytical purposes) the different aspects of Social Reality. Archer's (1995) Social Realist approach considers structure, culture and agency as ontologically detached, each having its own irreducible causal properties and powers and possess unique 'emergent properties' which are interactive with each other, indicating the categorised nature of social reality. This suggests that it is crucial to separate structure and culture from the agents. These three domains (structure, culture and agency) are considered as belonging to distinct layers (structure, culture and agency) of social reality in order that they may have effect, but not determine each other (Layton, 2012). Archer (1996) contends that it is critical to discover the manner in which society (in this case a multiracial school) operates by investigating the structure, culture and agency individually and in terms of exploring their interactions. Using analytical dualism allowed me to separate the different aspects (structure, culture and agency) that contribute to the description of a given social situation, assisting me to make conclusions about the relative contributory weight of culture, structure and agency in any given social situation. The interaction between culture, structure and agency takes place at the socio-cultural level (*ibid.*).

I will now deliberate how the three layers (structure, culture and agency) of social reality, are introduced in the literature.

- **Structure**

Social structures are present, and these structures are ontologically earlier to and independent from people functioning within them. Hence, people are born into or enter into a pre-structured environment (Archer, 1995; 1996). Social structures are a result of the actions or activities of the long dead and therefore the current actors are not accountable for

the manner in which the social environment is at the present moment (Archer, 1995). In relation to the present study, the manner in which the school is structured is not the responsibility of the current education system, school management, teachers, learners and school governing body but the way in which it functions currently is the responsibility of the current school management team.

Structures are activity-dependent; hence they are fairly independent from agency since structural conditioning is frontal to social action. Archer claims that structures are real but that they require the doings of agents to be reproduced or transformed (Archer, 1995; 1996). Structures exist independently of people and they do not require people's understanding or conversational perception in order to exercise causal influences on people (*ibid.*). Archer argues that researchers should not only explore social structures that are in existence in an environment by just asking the participants questions about social structures as the participants' understanding of structures might be inadequate (*ibid.*). Archer proposes that it is by means of transcendental argument that social analysts understand the nature and the interactions between innumerable structures within the social system (*ibid.*).

In the case of the current study, teachers who are new at the participating school may not be aware of the policies, rules, regulations, practices or curriculum that are used to influence the provision of equal opportunities to learn within the school prior to 1994 or might not be aware of the history of the conditioning context of the school. The rationale behind what caused the school to be what it is currently might be understood by the teachers who were at the school prior to democracy. Therefore, the present study aimed to unearth the history of the school and the policies and practices that were in place prior to democracy and the manner in which they have shaped the current situation. The study also explores the existing policies and practices and their implications for the provision of equal opportunities to learn in racially diverse classes.

Structures in existence form detailed situational logics for people in which they are mandated to perform (Archer, 1995). People act due to their entrusted interests to maintain a specific existing state of affairs. The structures are based on four basic propositions:

- I. There are internal and necessary interactions within and between social structures (SS).
- II. Causal influences are exerted by the social structures on social interactions (SI).
- III. There are causal relationships between groups and individuals at the level of social interaction (SI).
- IV. Social interaction can elaborate upon the composition of social structures (SS) by modifying current internal and necessary structural relationships and introducing new ones in the process of Morphogenesis. Where social structures are reproduced, internal and necessary relations between social structures are maintained (*ibid.*:168 – 169).

The original structural dissemination of a property affects the time taken to eliminating it through its influence on the population capable of changing it (Archer, 1995). Archer argues that all structures mark time-based opposition through the conditioning circumstance of action. This possibly occurs due to the fact that the structure's conditional effects have separated the population into social groups working for the maintenance as opposed to change of a given property since the property itself shares different goal-assigned interests to them at  $T^2$  (*ibid.*). In relation to the present study, this implies that the structure (multiracial primary school) has divided social groups (for example, teachers, learners, School Management Team (SMT), the prefect structure and the school governing body (SGB)) which function to maintain or alter the structure (*ibid.*).

Social structures at  $T^1$  are the outcome of countless past structures of predecessor agential and structural interactions, each of which was as a result of the outcome of still earlier analytic cycles (Archer, 1996; Lipscomb, 2014). This means that social structures lead and form the situations in which agents are placed and the ontological status of these structures is presented through the emergent causal powers that they mark in giving or proposing

interests to agents. Therefore, social structures have powers which are unconnected to the actions of the current agents. Structures, therefore, supply agents (individuals and groups) with interests (i.e., a frustrating or rewarding environment) with regard to the social roles or positions that they occupy. Social structures define or capture relationships between stratified or distinguished classes, ethnic groupings, occupational roles and societal positions and the relationships between organisations/institutions. Even though, the interaction between agents can transform or sustain structure, the relationship does not produce the existing structure (Archer, 1996; Lipscomb, 2014).

The above figures (1 to 3) show that the original structural influence does not fade away instantly, even given a collective persistence to change it. This shows that it takes time to change any structural property and that time symbolises one of the limitations for some groups. Regardless of how short the period is, it inhibits the accomplishment of certain objectives, particularly those which inspire efforts to transform them. Therefore, structural influences prolong beyond  $T^2$  (Archer, 1995). The purpose of the present study was to investigate the historical background of the school, the policies and practices that were available to drive the school prior to democracy and the manner in which the policies and practices have formed the existing situation. The study further examined the current policies and practices and their relation to the provision of equal opportunities to learn in racially diverse classes.

- ***Culture***

The cultural system consists of cultural forms and Archer describes culture as, amongst others, beliefs, values, theories, norms, and ideas that people or communities subscribe to (Archer, 1988). Culture also entails language, forms of knowledge, rituals, traditions and common-sense understanding. Once the idea has been lodged on the cultural record, albeit it is not stimulated or utilised at a specific time, it remains there to be re-experienced and utilised by the social actors (Archer, 2002). Like social structures, the cultural system prevails independently of people; it is before the present situation and it is the outcome of the

previous agents. Ideas can be in a relation with other ideas that are either complementary or contradictory. In addition, the consistent relationship of ideas to other ideas has socio-cultural importance and therefore influences agents' actions. These connections between ideas prevail whether social agents are aware of them or not (Archer, 1996). Social agents might be aware of the contradictions between ideas but choose to ignore them (Vorster, 2010).

The aim of the present study was to uncover the culture of the school. This includes, amongst others, the language of teaching and learning, values, practices, policies, rules and regulations that were used before and after the apartheid system, systems and practices and the effects of these previous cultural systems on the current practices and the provision of equal opportunities to learn in racially diverse classes. The study also explored the socio-cultural background of the current social agents (school principal, teachers and learners) and whether or not it complements or contradicts the cultural system of the school and how this affects social actions of teachers in terms of the provision of equal opportunities for racially diverse learners to learn. The study further investigated whether there are relations between the structure, culture and agential powers and properties and whether these relationships have transformed or reproduced the structure (school).

Cultural emergent properties (CEP) can dispense cultural resources and symbolic power such as ideologies and languages unequally (Layton, 2012). For instance, in the area of basic education, particularly in a multiracial primary school, learners can be supported or restricted depending on the prior knowledge that they bring to school and their previous access (or lack of) to the types of dialogues or cultural wealth appreciated at school. It therefore suggests that the academic success of a learner will rely mostly on whether he or she possesses a specific type of cultural wealth that is esteemed by the social structure (in this case a multiracial school). It also implies that the provision of opportunities to learn might not be equal for all learners depending on their socio-cultural backgrounds.

The following ontological proposals with regard to the cultural system are suggested:

- There exist logical relationships between the components of the cultural system (for example, contradiction and unity).
- There are causal influences exercised by the cultural system on the socio-economic cultural level.
- There are causal relations between groups and individuals at the socio-economic cultural level.
- The cultural system (and structural system) is expanded or reproduced because of socio-cultural collaboration, amending or reproducing current logical interactions and adding new ones or maintaining the old ones (Archer, 1988:143).

For ideas to have an effect on the social context, they must have owners (Archer, 1988). The ideas that people hold about things puts the agents in particular situational logics. Situational logics are reliant on the complementarity and contradictoriness of structural parts or cultural items or ideas. In the layer of the structure, the situational logics refers to the relationships between different components of the structural system while, in the layer of culture, situational logics entails the relationships between ideas. Contradictory ideas prevail in the cultural domain, but they have no influence if they are not perceived. Therefore, when contradictory ideas are endorsed by two opposing groups, they confuse their owners in the situational logic of the constraining contradiction and make it difficult for socio-cultural groups to operate. On the other hand, if ideas are held in a relation of essential complementarity with one another, it implies that one idea is reliant on the other idea for its survival. In this case the action context is observed as problem-free and thus social agents will strive to enhance the jointly beneficial relation through a process of systematisation. In relation to the present study, I argue that there is a possibility that teachers who were at the school prior to democracy might still hold on to the cultures of previous education system since they attended their higher education training during the apartheid regime and they were prepared to teach a single racial group. Therefore, the ideas, theories, values and beliefs that they have about teaching might contradict those of teachers who were trained after the apartheid system. Thus, the aim of the present study was to uncover whether there are contradictory or complementary ideas about teaching racially diverse learners. Specifically,

the study investigated whether or not the social culture (multiracial primary school) provides equal opportunities to learn irrespective of their racial and socio-cultural backgrounds.

- **Agency**

Archer (1995) highlights that it is important to analyse agency as a morphogenetic cycle. Archer differentiates between (a) agents as collectivised with similar life chances, (b) actors as individual persons filling their given roles, and (c) persons as people with a personal and social self. Archer distinguishes between corporate agents which have power and influence, and primary agents which do not have such power and influence (Archer, 1995). Cooperative agency is when agents who have a shared interest become organised around particular goals and perform together in groups when striving to change society (Archer, 2002). Primary agents are those people who are not able to exercise much agency due to involuntary disempowered positions in society. Social actors are people who have been able to develop a solid social identity which is often related to a specific role or position in a society. Unlike primary agents, social actors are able to use their agency by virtue of their powerful positions which give them authority to do so (Archer, 1995). In relation to the present study, cooperative agents can be the district officials and school management team (school principal, deputy principal, head of departments) who possess power to influence the policies, rules and regulations of the school; social actors represent the school management team (school principal, deputy principal, head of departments) who have authority to manage the primary agents and guide them in terms of curriculum implementation; while primary agents refer to teachers who are the implementers of the policies or curriculum and learners are receivers of the curriculum.

Morphogenesis of agency begins at structural or cultural morphogenesis (Zeuner, 1999). This suggests that one morphogenetic cycle leads to the other. In terms of morphogenesis of agency, power relationships can extensively thwart restructuring among cooperative agents (*ibid.*). Transformation takes place when there is collaboration between cooperative agents (district officials), social actors (school management team) and primary agents (teachers and



learners). However, if the cooperate agents distance themselves from the primary agents (teachers and learners), change will not transpire (*ibid.*). However, the primary agents in the long run will arrange themselves and then become cooperate agents and the results will be regrouping (*ibid.*). Therefore, Morphogenesis becomes reality and double Morphogenesis occurs. Thus, Morphogenesis of agency gives birth to Morphogenesis of actors. Elaboration of roles happens when agents reorganise themselves. This then suggests that the number of roles which can be ascribed to persons will expand and then triple Morphogenesis happens (*ibid.*). The rationale behind a morphogenetic process is that agents and actors are human beings who can think, make decisions and choices and act upon their decisions (Archer, 1995).

### **3.4 Limitations of Archer's Morphogenetic Social Realist Theory**

The Morphogenetic Social Realist theory places more emphasis on analytical dualism, thereby analytically separating the conditioning effects of structure, culture and agency, each of which have their own SEP, CEP and PEP on the events and practices that surround the provision of equal opportunities to learn in racially diverse classrooms. Archer's Morphogenetic approach is based on a combination of a realist ontology and a methodology of practical social analysis that she calls 'analytical dualism' (Stones, 2001:180). Archer's theory openly offers a dualistic social ontology which deliberately maintains the independence of people and the parts, at certain moments in the social process (King, 1999:201). The ontology of realism is itself founded upon this 'analytical dualism' in which structure can be separated from action (Archer, 1995:150). The distinguishing feature of the morphogenetic approach is its appreciation of the temporal dimension, through which and in which structure and agency shape one another (*ibid.*:92). Analytical dualism allows one to examine the temporally distinct relationship between structure and agency, i.e., between the structural conditioning ( $T^1$ ), social interaction and its immediate outcome ( $T^2$  and  $T^3$ ) and structural elaboration ( $T^4$ ) (Stones, 2001:180). Structure pre-exists and is independent of individuals, i.e., structures are not only irreducible to people, they pre-exist them (Archer, 1995). King (1999:209) maintains that out of the totality of social interactions some structural-properties are produced which are different from independent and preceding individual action. According to King, the concept of autonomous social structure on which Archer bases this Realist Social Theory is

therefore contradictory (*ibid.*). King (1999) claims that Archer failed to prove the autonomy and priority of social structure (*ibid.*). In other words, this suggests that structure is not autonomous, pre-existent or causal. Society must be understood in relation to individuals and their interrelations alone and any form of ontological dualism which suggests a realm of objective or structural features is a mere reification which can at all times be reduced to individuals and their interaction (King, 1999). However, Archer (2000a) responds to this claim by stating that the Realist Social Theory addresses the problem of structure and agency from a position of analytical and not philosophical dualism. She adds that there is never a moment when both structure and agency are not in play.

Stones (2001) argues that there is a duality of agents that is implicit but not elaborated in Archer's morphogenetic approach and proposes that Archer's morphogenetic approach must incorporate this duality within agents. Stones (2001) describes agency as the ability to act reflexively or prereflexively (i.e., to act routinely or differently) in relation to external and internal structures that provide conditions for action, thereby resulting in a duality within agents. He claims that if structures enter into people, then people who are part of the context of action will themselves be occupied by the structures as agents, they will recursively draw upon in producing outcomes (i.e., the duality of structure). Stones also claims that Archer did not explore the duality within context, that is the duality of structure within the context of action, where structure is both external and internal to agency (Stones, 2001:185). This lack of attention to the ontological qualities of the duality within context has methodological implications since Archer writes as if it is not a problem to treat structure as if the agents within the structures were incapable of making a difference. Furthermore, there are some methodological problems of separating the structure from agency if Archer has to translate ontology into practical social analysis (*ibid.*:186).

### **3.5 Conclusion**

In this chapter I described how this study adopted a Critical Realist position as developed by Bhaskar (1975; 1978; 1998), which highlights a stratified ontology and fundamental

theoretical framework that informs the empirical research. This stratified ontology encompasses the realms of the real, the actual and the empirical. By following this approach, the aim of the research was to ascertain and uncover those underlying structures and mechanisms (at the layer of real) that are stimulated to generate events and phenomena at the layers of the actual and empirical.

I have also discussed Margaret Archer's Social Realist framework which builds on the meta-theory of Critical Realism and provides an appropriate methodological approach to executing social research. Social Realism separates the world into three layers: structure, culture and agency which can be explored independently through what Margaret Archer called 'analytical dualism' in order to understand their interaction.

I have further aligned this study with Margaret Archer's Morphogenesis/Morphostasis framework as a theoretical (analytical) approach for this research. Morphogenesis/Morphostasis refers to change and continuity respectively. Using this framework helped me understand whether there are relations between the structure, culture and agency and whether their interaction has changed or reproduced the school (structure) in terms of the provision of equal opportunities to learn in racially diverse classrooms.

The next chapter will deal with research paradigm, methodology, methods used in this study and the limitations of the study research methodology.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

## **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter describes the research approach that informed this study. It explains the methodological paradigm that has informed the study, my ontological as well as epistemological standpoints. It also describes the research design, research sites, sampling, as well as data collection methods and data analysis. The chapter further explains quality assurance measures (i.e., how I attended to issues of trustworthiness in qualitative research in a single-case study approach), ethical considerations, and the limitations of the study. In concluding it, I explain the importance of the study to the broader context.

## **4.2 Methodological paradigm**

### **4.2.1 Paradigmatic assumptions**

Various methods of research construct various forms of knowledge, which can make different claims to the truth. The beliefs one holds as a researcher will directly affect the methodology that is seen as suitable for purpose in one's research (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2002; 2007). These beliefs may take the form of ontological beliefs which direct one's understanding of the nature of a social phenomenon being investigated. Hence, the researcher asks whether social reality is external to individuals or is it a creation of individual consciousness, is it objective in nature or the result of individual reasoning, is it a given out there in the world or is it created by one's own mind? The researcher may also hold certain epistemological beliefs about whether knowledge can be developed or whether it has to be experienced (*ibid.*).

Qualitative researchers do not assume that there is a single unitary view of reality (Krauss, 2005; Creswell, 2009; 2012). This implies that people view the world from their own points of view, and they understand reality differently. Qualitative researchers believe that there are numerous perceptions of reality that exist. Because of the research approach and the nature of the problem under investigation, the present study followed the Critical Realist paradigm (Bhaskar, 1975; Guba & Lincoln, 1994). While the positivist paradigm concerns a single reality

and interpretivism multiple realities, Critical Realism concerns multiple perceptions about a single, mind-independent reality. The positivist paradigm predominates in science and accepts that science quantitatively measures independent facts about a single apprehensible reality. This suggests that the data and their analysis are value-free and that data do not change because they are observed (Healy & Perry, 2000). This further implies that the object of the study is independent of the researchers, knowledge is looked at through direct observations and measurements. Thus, researchers perceive the world through a “one-way mirror” (*ibid.*). Critical Realism recognises that perceptions have certain flexibility and that there are differences between reality and people’s perceptions of reality. Critical Realists acknowledge that knowledge of reality is due to social conditioning and therefore cannot be understood autonomously of the social actors involved in the knowledge generation process (Kraus, 2005). This suggests that, in order for the researcher to identify the independent reality, he or she needs to understand it in relation to the people involved. Relating to the present study, in order to know the underlying mechanisms that enable or constrain the provision of equal opportunities to learn in racially diverse classes, I needed to interact (interview) with the curriculum implementers (school principal and teachers).

Some of qualitative research is thus based on a Critical Realist ontology (Archer, 1995; Bhaskar, 1998), particularly Social Realism (Archer, 1995) that assumes that there is an external reality which exists independently of people’s beliefs about or understanding of it. In other words, there is a difference between the way the world is, and the meaning and interpretation of that world held by individuals (Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls, & Ormston, 2013). When a researcher explains his or her paradigmatic perspective, the interaction between ontological and epistemological assumptions as well as meta-theoretical underpinnings, the research questions and methodology become of utmost importance (Mason, 2002). My research approach could not be separated from my paradigmatic perspective on the world of research.

In this study, I investigated the teaching strategies employed in racially diverse classrooms. I explored whether or not teachers provide learners who come from diverse racial backgrounds with equal opportunities to learn. I realised that Critical Realism would provide valuable insights because, from an ontological perspective, Critical Realism assumes that there is an

external reality and that this reality exists independently of the researcher's mind or human knowledge or their ability to perceive it (Sobh & Perry, 2005; Wynn & Williams, 2012). Notably, reality is stratified into three domains, namely the real, the actual and empirical (Bhaskar, 1998). The domain of real contains the objects and structures of reality and the causal powers inherent to them as they independently exist. The domain of actual is a subcategory of the real that consists of the events that take place when the causal powers of structures and objects are enacted irrespective whether or not these are observed by people (Bhaskar, 1998; Wynn & Williams 2012). The domain of empirical is a subcategory of the actual and includes those events which people are able to experience through observation or measurement. In relation to my study, the domain of the real (structures and objects) is composed of the education and school policies, material resources, rules and regulations that exist independently and have underlying powers to cause events (teaching and learning) in the domain of the actual which can be observed and examined in the domain of empirical.

From an epistemological point of view, Critical Realism proposes explanations of reality on the basis of the analysis of the experiences observed and interpreted by the participants, together with other kinds of data such as data from document analysis. The consequent knowledge claims are focused on stipulating and clarifying those components of reality which must happen in order for the events and experiences under exploration to take place (Sayer, 1992; Collier, 1994). Critical Realism explains knowledge as consisting of both intransitive and transitive dimensions (Bhaskar, 1975). The intransitive aspect consists of the components of reality that people attempt to describe, and which are basically independent of the people's perceptions and experiences. The transitive aspect refers to researchers' observations and theories about independent reality that have been established because of scientific investigation. Critical Realists acknowledge that researchers' knowledge of the intransitive objects (independent reality) is shaped in the transitive aspect facilitated by the social structures to which they belong (Bhaskar, 1975; Wynn & Williams, 2012). This knowledge of underlying structures and mechanisms is formed in combination with existing social relations and opinions together with the researcher's sensory and conceptual perceptions (Wynn & Williams, 2012). In relation to the present study, the intransitive aspect (independent reality) refers those underlying structures and mechanisms (policies, rules, regulations) that govern

the school in terms of its operation, while the transitive aspect refers to my knowledge and opinions about the independent reality that I develop as a result of the observations made and my interaction with the participants during the data collection process.

As indicated above, Critical Realism describes the independent reality as comprising of structures that are themselves collections of interconnected items and mechanisms through which those items interdepend (Sobh & Perry, 2005). From a Critical Realist point of view, reality is real, but only imperfectly and probabilistically apprehensible, and therefore multiple methods of data collection are necessary to attempt to know it (Merriam, 1988; Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Yin (1989) states that in Critical Realism the findings of research are expanded by analytical interpretation that illustrates how empirical findings of a research project settle within theories.

According to Sobh and Perry (2005), decisions are made in the outside world. For instance, in relation to the present study, decisions about the basic education system (policies, and curriculum amongst others) are made outside the school. Thus, teachers, the school principal, and learners cannot do whatever they feel like doing in terms of, amongst others, the school policies and curriculum implementation, but they are guided by the policies decided outside the school in order to meet the needs of the Department of Basic Education. Hence, the aim of this research, conducted within the Critical Realist paradigm, is to search towards an understanding of common reality of the participating school's education system in which teachers, school principal and learners operate inter-dependently, that is, to explore the underlying structures and mechanisms that contribute to or hinder the provision of equal opportunities to learn in a school serving learners who come from racially diverse backgrounds.

#### **4.2.2 The qualitative research approach**

I chose the qualitative research approach for this study. Qualitative researchers believe that the best way to understand the phenomenon is to view it in its context (Denzin & Lincoln,



1998). This can be done by becoming immersed in it and to move into the culture or organisation being studied and experience what it is like to be part of it. Rather than approaching measurement with the idea of constructing a fixed instrument or set of questions, qualitative researchers choose to allow questions to emerge and change as one becomes familiar with the study content (Krauss, 2005). Qualitative research is essentially an exploratory process where a researcher progressively makes sense of a social phenomenon being investigated by comparing, contrasting, reproducing, cataloguing and categorising the object of the study (Miles & Huberman, 1994). In order to achieve this, a researcher needs to engage himself or herself in the everyday life of the site selected for the study so as to interact with the participants about the problem under examination. This relates to the present study as it is qualitative in nature. I have done this study by spending some time at the participating school, interviewing teachers, the school principal and learners, observing classroom teaching and learning as well as analysing documents in order to explore whether or not equal opportunities to learn are provided to learners who come from diverse racial backgrounds.

Qualitative research is a positioned activity that locates the observer in the world (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Qualitative research is comprised of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world observable. These practices “...turn the world into a series of representations comprising fieldnotes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings and memo to the self” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000:3). This shows that qualitative research includes an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. It also suggests that qualitative researchers, compared to quantitative researchers, investigate things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). The manner in which people being investigated understand and interpret their social reality is one of the fundamental themes of qualitative research (Bryman, 1988). This implies that qualitative research is an interpretative approach aimed at understanding the meanings which people attach to phenomena (such as actions, decisions, beliefs, and values) within their social worlds (Ritchie *et al.*, 2013). The present study took place at a single multiracial school where the actual teaching and learning happen. I investigated the teaching strategies employed in racially diverse classrooms, that is, whether

the school as a multiracial context, provides equal opportunities to learn to all racially diverse learners.

I conducted this study within the qualitative research approach as qualitative research lends itself to exploratory and inductive research (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998; Trochim, 2001). In using a qualitative research design, I was more interested in the interpretations (Bryman, 2004) that teachers, school principal and learners attach to the effectiveness of teaching strategies used in racially diverse classrooms. In utilising the qualitative research approach, I applied a Critical Realist position established by Bhaskar, which develops a stratified ontology and an underlying theoretical framework that informs empirical research. This stratified ontology consists of the realms of the real, the actual and the empirical. By applying this approach, the aim was to identify and expose those underlying structures and mechanisms at the level of the real (policies, practices, regulations) that are stimulated to produce events and phenomena at the layer of the actual and empirical. I also applied Archer's Social Realist Framework to build on the meta-theory of Critical Realism. The Social Realist framework established by Archer provides a critical methodological approach for carrying out a research. Social Realism categorises the world into the domains of structure, culture and agency which, according to Archer, can be explored individually through analytical dualism in order to understand their interaction. The world in this case is a multiracial school which has policies, rules, regulations and material resources (structure), the values, ideas, norms (culture) and teachers and learners (agency). The Social Realist framework has assisted me to examine the structural domains and cultural domain separately and how they condition the teaching and learning and whether or not they enable or constrain the provision of equal opportunities to learn in racially diverse classes. This has helped me to understand the occurrence of events (teaching and learning) in a multiracial school and how teachers and learners define them from their own perspectives. It has further enabled me to develop a high level of detail about the teachers and learners and the classrooms where teaching and learning take place, and to be highly involved in the actual experiences of the participants. This is because the focus of qualitative research is on participants' perceptions and experiences, and the way they make sense of the actual events. The purpose of this study was to understand multiple perceptions

of realities and their effects on the provision of equal opportunities to learn in racially diverse classes as constructed by participants in their natural setting (Creswell, 2003).

Through the qualitative research approach, “...*the researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyses words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a real environment*” (Creswell, 1998:15). Qualitative research is a form of interpretive inquiry in which the researcher clarifies of what he or she sees, hears and understands (Creswell & Brown, 1992; Creswell, 1998). Therefore, the researcher’s interpretations cannot be disconnected from his or her background, history, environment, and former understanding (*ibid.*). This includes recording multiple perceptions, detecting many issues involved in a situation and, mostly, outlining a greater picture that develops (Creswell & Brown, 1992; Creswell, 2009). This relates to the present study as it employed various methods of data collection in order to generate multidimensional illustrations of whether the school provides equal opportunities to learn in a racially diverse class.

Qualitative researchers perceive human beings as a part of research that is very liquid and cannot be judged by strict scientific tools (Trochim, 2000; Krauss, 2005; Shashidhar Babese, 2007). This is because participants are not objects, but they are human beings who can think and speak for themselves and can also define things from their own perspectives. This means that human beings as participants are part of the research since they are being interviewed and their activities are observed in order to gather in-depth information about the situation or problem under study. Since Critical Realists operate within the qualitative research belief that there are multiple perceptions of reality that exist independently, I explored various forms of evidence from different individuals’ points of view and experiences (i.e., teachers, learners and the school principal) to investigate the underlying factors that enable or hinder the provision of equal opportunities to learn who come from diverse racial backgrounds.

The qualitative research approach allowed me to design empirical techniques, describe and interpret teachers’ experiences and practices as they teach racially diverse learners (Pickard

& Dixon, 2004). I utilised multiple methods of data collection such as interviews, classroom observations, field notes, documents analysis (education and school policies) and audio recordings in order to have a detailed understanding of the extent to which the school provides equal opportunities to learn in racially diverse classrooms. The use of multiple methods of data collection assisted me to triangulate the data (cross check and validate whether what was said during interviews is what occurred in the classrooms during teaching and learning). The advantage of a qualitative research approach to this study is that the research focuses on teachers' experiences and the meanings they attach to events, processes and structures in their school as a social setting (Berg, 2007). Therefore, the qualitative research approach enabled me to gather data about teachers' knowledge and practices about teaching and learning in racially diverse classes and the extent to which the pre – and post-apartheid education policies enabled or constrained the provision of equal opportunities to learn.

#### **4.2.3 The research design**

My research is a case study of *Arabia Primary School* (pseudonym). I chose the school in Pretoria because it was easily accessible to me. While this school might be considered a public school since it is a government school, it has the unique characteristic that it serves learners who come from diverse racial backgrounds and learners are taught by predominantly white teachers. The reason for using a case study was to have an in-depth understanding (Creswell, 2007; 2009) of whether or not there have been changes between the pre- and post- apartheid eras in the way in which teachers provide opportunities to learn and the extent to which they are equal in racially diverse classrooms.

#### **4.2.4 The case study**

As discussed above, in Critical Realism the unique part of intensive case study selection is the focus on revealing the underlying processes, articulated as causal mechanisms which have generated a distinctive set of events and the specific structural or contextual factors that

integrated to produce them (Wynn & Williams, 2012). A case study research focuses on an intensive exploration of events taking place in a single structure such as a single school (Bygstad, 2010). It is a rigorous description and analysis of a phenomenon or social unit such as an individual, group, institution, or community (Merriam & Associates, 2002; Welman & Kruger, 2003). According to Creswell (2009), a case study is a strategy of inquiry in which the researcher examines a programme, event, activity, process, or one or more individuals. Creswell (2009) further explains that cases are restricted by time and activity and researchers gather detailed data utilising various data collection strategies over a sustained period of time. In case studies, researchers are directed towards understanding the uniqueness and the peculiarity of a particular case in all its complexity (Welman & Kruger, 2003). By focusing on a single phenomenon or entity, a case study approach seeks to describe the phenomenon in depth. A selection of a case study generally mirrors the occurrence of events which are illustrative of the phenomena a researcher is trying to investigate (Merriam & Associates, 2002; Wynn & Williams, 2012). In relation to my study, I selected a case study of one multiracial school as guided by the literature (Merriam & Associates, 2002; Welman & Kruger, 2003; Yin, 2003; Creswell, 2009; Wynn & Williams, 2012) to examine in depth the underlying structures and mechanisms that enable or constrain the provision of equal opportunities to learn to learners who come from diverse racial backgrounds.

Preferably, a case study is important in examining contemporary events within their real-life context, particularly when the boundaries between the phenomenon and context are not clearly evident (Yin, 1989; 2003). Case study research relies on many of the same techniques as historical research, but it also adds two sources of evidence not usually included in the historian's list, namely direct observations of the events being studied, and interviews of the persons involved in the events. Even though case studies and histories can interconnect, the exceptional strength of a case study research is its ability to deal with a broader variety of evidence such as documents, artefacts, interviews and observations (*ibid.*). Furthermore, a case study research deals with a technically distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interests than data points and thus relies on multiple sources of evidence, in which data can be compared and joined through triangulation. Case study research also

benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis (*ibid.*).

A case study approach permitted me to employ various data gathering methods (Creswell, 2002; 2007). In this case study, I relied predominantly on interviewing, observing, and document analysis as main methodological approaches. I drew on the experiences of the school principal and the teachers in terms of teaching racially diverse learners, and the experiences of learners with regard to learning in racially diverse classes. I captured, analysed, and conveyed situational narrative generally through thick and rich descriptions. I have found the case study approach to be important for my study which sought to uncover the underlying factors that contribute to the provision of equal opportunities to learn in a classroom containing learners who come from diverse racial backgrounds.

#### ***4.2.4.1 The selection and description of study context***

As already outlined, this study was conducted in one multiracial primary school called *Arabia Primary* (pseudonym), located in the Gauteng Province. *Arabia Primary School* was established in 1886, and it started operating with three classrooms and 12 learners. However, within a couple of months, the number of learners increased to 68. At its initiation, the school was not charging any fees (a no-fee school). The number of teachers were three (one male teacher who was also the principal and two female teachers). I chose to carry out my study within the province of Gauteng since it is a province with mixed races and it is where I stay. Gauteng means "*at the gold*". This is a Sotho word, and is the locative form of the word "gauta" ("gold")<sup>4</sup>.

The figures below depict a map of the Republic of South Africa and that of Gauteng school districts (Figure 5). Gauteng Province (seen in Figure 4) is one of the nine provinces in South Africa. Geographically, Gauteng Province is the smallest province and it is located in the

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<sup>4</sup><https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gauteng>

Highveld which is home to some of the country's most important commercial farming areas, as well as its largest concentration of metropolitan centres. It is highly urbanised, containing the country's largest city, Johannesburg; its administrative capital, Pretoria; and major industrial areas such as Midrand and Vanderbijlpark. Gauteng is the wealthiest province due to well-developed infrastructure and industry. The province has approximately 15 million people according to estimates and the main racial profiles of the population are Black African, White, Coloured and Asian<sup>5</sup>.

Gauteng Province is divided into 15 education districts. Pretoria (also known as City of Tshwane) is situated within Gauteng Province. Pretoria is divided into four education districts: Gauteng North, Tshwane West, Tshwane North and Tshwane South (Figure 5). The selected school is located within Tshwane South District. Tshwane South District is located in Pretoria city centre<sup>6</sup>. The major part of Pretoria is urban and it is populated by a variety of ethnic groups that include Black, Coloured, Indian and White. When selecting a school in Pretoria, particularly within Tshwane South District, I did not anticipate problems related to long distance travelling for data collection as I am residing in Stoneridge area, 25 kilometres from Pretoria city centre.

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<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gauteng>

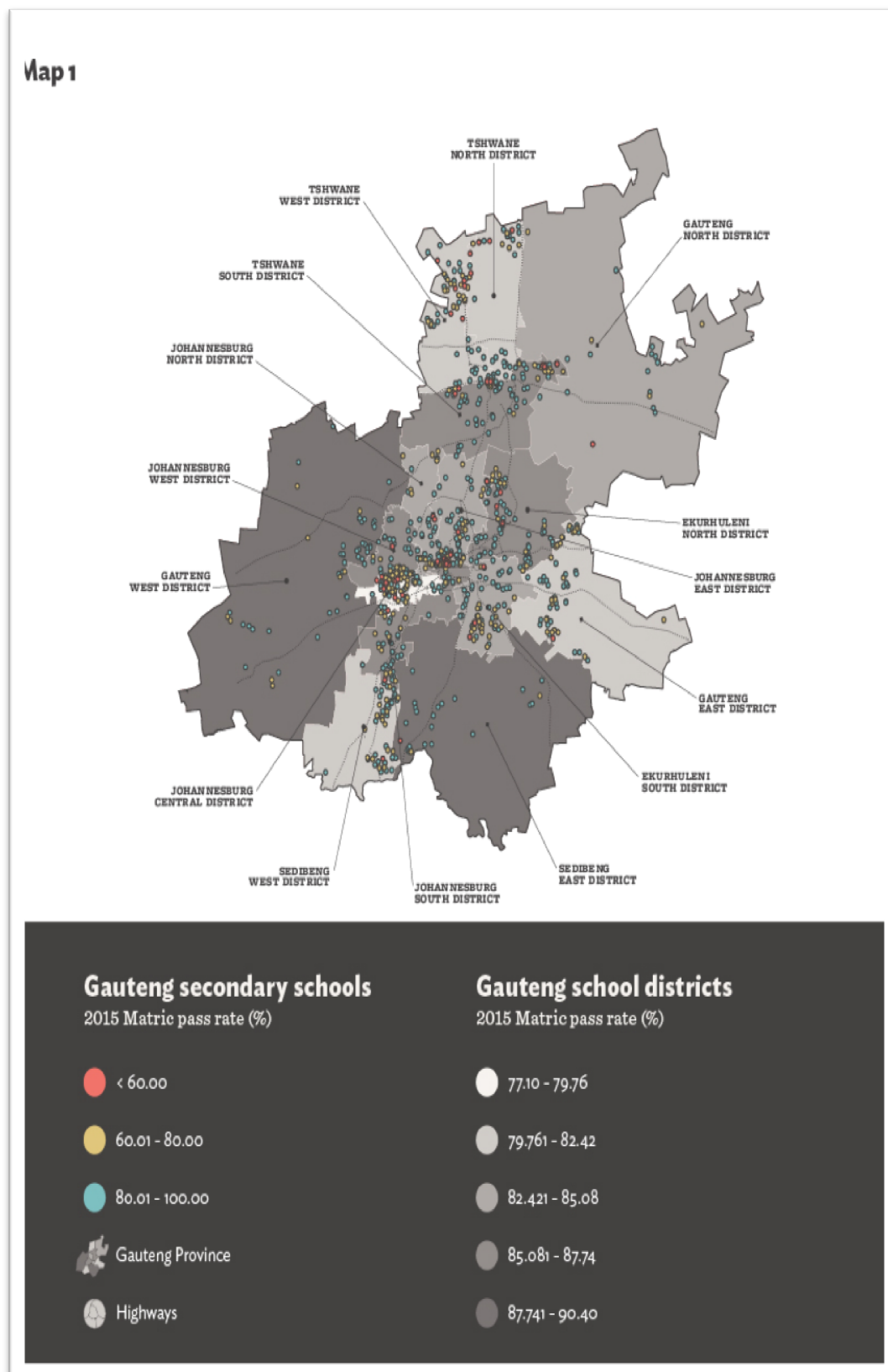
**Figure 4: Map of the Republic of South Africa**



Source: [www.southafrica.info/about/geography](http://www.southafrica.info/about/geography)



Figure 5: Map of school districts in Gauteng Province



Source: <http://www.gcro.ac.za/outputs/map-of-the-month/detail/the-quality-of-education-in-gauteng/>

#### 4.2.4.2 Sampling

The main aim of sampling was to determine how my study was going to be carried out at *Arabia Primary School*. I purposefully chose *Arabia Primary School* which is former white school that now caters learners who come from diverse racial backgrounds in the post-apartheid era. Since I followed Bhaskar's Critical Realism meta-theory supported by Archer's Social Realist framework, purposive sampling allowed me to choose the school as a case because the school demonstrates some structures or practices (former white school and multiracial teaching staff and learners) in which I was interested (Silverman, 2005). The structures and practices are discussed in the chapters below. My interest was to explore whether these structures or practices enable or hinder teachers to provide equal opportunities to learn in racially diverse classes. I was also interested in examining whether there are any changes from the pre-apartheid to and the post-apartheid era in the manner in which equal opportunities to learn are provided to learners who come from diverse racial backgrounds. Therefore, I found *Arabia Primary School*, compared to other former white schools within Tshwane South District, as an appropriate school for this research case as it serves learners who come from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds.

I purposefully selected this school because I believed it was going to help me to understand the problem and the research question under investigation by providing data about the effectiveness of teaching strategies employed by teachers in racially diverse classrooms and, in particular, data about the underlying mechanisms (rules, regulations, practices, policies and curriculum) that enable or hamper the provision of equal opportunities to learn irrespective of their racial backgrounds (Creswell, 2009). The school is also recognised as one of the primary schools in Gauteng Province that provide high quality teaching and learning to the learners as evidenced by the high learners' pass rate in the Annual National Assessment in 2013 and 2014 academic years.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup><https://www.Arabiaprimary.co.za/History/history.html>

#### **4.2.4.2.1 Sample size**

The sample for this study involved two Senior Phase teachers, the school principal, and sixteen Grade 6 and 7 learners (eight from each grade). The key informants were the two teachers and the principal since my interest was to uncover what goes on in the classrooms in terms of teaching and learning in a racially diverse class, that is, whether or not teachers provide equal opportunities to learn regardless of their racial backgrounds. I selected the two teachers using purposive sampling because they come from different racial backgrounds and one (Grade 7) started teaching at the school before democracy while the Grade 6 teacher came to the school in 2011. The rationale behind selecting these two teachers and involving the school principal was to obtain detailed information about whether or not there have been any changes in the period prior to and after the apartheid period with regard to the provision of equal opportunities to learn in racially diverse classrooms. The other reason was also to understand the implications the rules, regulations, practices, policies and curriculum that were implemented during and post the apartheid period have on the provision of equal opportunities to learn. I also included learners in order to have a deeper understanding about their experiences of learning in a racially diverse class. The selection of learners was done in the form of stratified sampling (using race). I requested a list of Grades 6 and 7 learners from the school principal, and from there I categorised learners according to race. I then selected learners randomly from each category so that I would have sixteen learners representing the four racial groups (*i.e.*, Black, White, Coloured and Asian).

I selected a relatively small sample size, *viz.*, the school principal, two Senior Phase teachers, and sixteen Grade 6 and 7 learners (eight from each grade) because I wanted to have an in-depth understanding of how one multiracial primary school conditions the actions of school principal and teachers in terms of the provision of equal opportunities to learn. I also wanted to explore whether the actions of the school principal and teachers have transformed (Morphogenesis) or reproduced/maintained (Morphostasis) the school structure and culture (Archer, 1995). Further, I wanted to understand the problem and the research question under investigation from the viewpoints of the participants rather than trying to extrapolate the findings of the study to the bigger population. I purposefully chose the research site and

participants who would best enable me to understand the problem and the research questions (Creswell, 2003).

As indicated earlier, I targeted the Senior Phase level of the school, particularly the Grade 6 and 7 teachers and learners. The rationale behind this selection was because there is a linkage between Grade 6 and 7 content as Grade 7 is a progressive continuation of Grade 6. I selected Grade 6 and 7 classrooms given that these are the Senior Phase classes in the primary school phase, and thus these learners should demonstrate the accumulated learning from all previous grades and show adequate knowledge to proceed to secondary school.

I selected Social Science and English Learning Areas. The reason I selected these two Learning Areas is that I am familiar with Social Science as I used to teach it when I was still a primary school teacher for the period of three years. I have also chosen English since it is the language of learning and teaching (LOLT) in the selected school and it is also an international language. The rationale behind the selection of Social Science and English lessons was to get an understanding of the effectiveness of teaching strategies utilised by teachers in these subjects and whether these teaching strategies enable or constrain them to provide equal opportunities to learn in a racially diverse class.

#### **4.2.5 Data collection**

I collected data using various data collection methods, including conducting classroom observations, face-to-face semi-structured interviews with the school principal, teachers and learners, and analysis of documents (teachers' lesson time tables, chapters of textbooks which were used for teaching and learning, pre- and post-1994 education policies, the policy of the school on the code and conduct, school policy on language, religion and admission as well as the vision and mission of the school). Using different methods of data collection (semi-structured interviews, classroom observations and document analysis) has enabled me to cross-validate and triangulate the data. The different data collection methods are discussed below:

#### **4.2.5.1 Semi-structured interviews**

An interview is a two-way conversation in which the interviewer asks the participants questions to collect data and to learn about the ideas, beliefs, views, opinions and behaviours of the participant (Maree, 2010). The aim of qualitative interviews is to see the world through the eyes of the participants and they also aim at obtaining rich descriptive data that will help the researcher to understand the participants' construction of knowledge and social reality (*ibid.*). There are different types of interviews such as open-ended interviews, face-to-face semi-structured interviews, structured interviews and focus group interviews (*ibid.*). The use of face-to-face semi-structured interviews afforded me an opportunity to explore the meanings participants attached to their experiences regarding the structures and practices that enable the provision of equal opportunities to learn in racially diverse classes (Ponterotto, 2005). They also permitted me to observe non-verbal clues of participants, especially when they exhibited confusion and uncertainty (Lee, 2003).

I used face-to-face semi-structured interviews to corroborate data from classroom observations and document analysis (Maree, 2010). A face-to-face semi-structured interview is when a schedule is prepared that has adequately open-ended questions to enable the contents to be recorded, digressions and expansions made, new avenues to be included and further probing to be undertaken (Cohen *et al.*, 2007). Interviews were done in English as it is the LOLT of the school. I used the elaboration probes in order to get a full picture of the phenomenon being studied and also asked the participants to tell me more about certain examples or answers given (Maree, 2010). I also used clarification probes to generate further explanations from the participants and check if my understanding of what they said was accurate (Maree, 2010). Interviews in qualitative research are advantageous for gathering facts, accessing beliefs about facts, identifying motives and feelings, exploring present or previous behaviour, and eliciting reasons and explanations (Silverman, 1993). Thus, semi-structured interviews allow flexibility rather than rigidity of sequence of discussions, permitting participants to raise and pursue issues and matters that might not have been included in an interview schedule (*ibid.*).

Each teacher was interviewed individually for about 45 minutes to 1 hour. The first interview was done on 16 April 2014 with a Grade 6 teacher, *Ms Petersen* (pseudonym), who teaches Social Science and English. The interview was done during lunch time in her classroom. The second interview was carried out on 27 May 2014 with a Grade 7 teacher, *Ms Osteen* (pseudonym), who also teaches Social Science and English. The interview was conducted during her free period in her classroom when learners were attending lessons in other classrooms. The main aim of the interviews with the teachers was to understand whether or not the teaching practices and material resources they employ during the teaching and learning enable them to provide racially diverse learners with equal opportunities to learn.

The school principal was interviewed for approximately one and half hours. The interview with the school principal, *Mr Norman* (pseudonym), was carried out on 26 June 2014 in his office. I wanted to get an understanding of the history of the school and the kinds of policies, rules, regulations, practices, systems and curriculum that were driving the education system of the school before and after 1994. Furthermore, I explored the implications of these policies and curriculum on the provision of equal opportunities to learn. I examined whether or not there are changes over the pre- and post-apartheid period regarding the provision of equal opportunities for learners in racially diverse classrooms to learn. The interview with the school principal took place after school as it was the only time he was available.

I also conducted face-to-face semi-structured interviews with each of the sixteen selected learners. Interviews with each of the learners were conducted only once in order to understand their experiences of being taught in racially diverse classes. Learners were interviewed after school with consent from their parents and their own permission. They were interviewed individually between 13 May and 28 May 2014 after school in a hall because teachers were in the classrooms to mark learners' work or prepare lessons for the next day. I interviewed learners individually because I wanted them to be free in providing the information about their learning experiences and their experiences of being in a school that caters for learners from diverse racial backgrounds. Interviews with each learner took about 45 to 60 minutes. With the permission of the participants, all the interviews were audio-

recorded and later transcribed verbatim. I relied on digital recording equipment to preserve the responses of the participants, which proved to be beneficial during the subsequent categorising and data analysis. I took the advice of Patton (1990) who suggested that an audio-recorder is an essential instrument for collection of information. After every interview, when I got home I would download each voice recording and transform it onto a particular file format so that it was easy for me to play it back during transcription. All the interviews were transcribed and the transcripts became the data sources for analysis. The limitation of the interviews is that they provide indirect information filtered with the views of the participants and the researcher's presence may bias the responses as the researcher interprets the responses the way he or she understands them (Creswell, 2009:179).

#### ***4.2.5.2 Classroom observations***

Maree (2010) defines observation as a systematic process of recording the behavioural patterns of participants, objects and occurrences without questioning or communicating with them. Qualitative observations are those in which the researcher takes field notes on the behaviour of individuals at the research site (Creswell, 2009). In these field notes, the researcher documents in an unstructured or semi-structured manner the activities of the participants at the research site. In this study I used non-participant observation because I wanted to observe the delivery of teaching and learning without taking an active part in the situation under study (Creswell, 2009). Non-participant observations allowed me to hear, see and begin to experience the reality (Creswell, 2009) as teachers presented the lessons in the classrooms comprised of learners who came from diverse racial backgrounds. I used classroom observations to help me to gain deeper insight and understanding with regard to teaching practices employed and whether these teaching practices enabled teachers to provide equal opportunities to learn in racially diverse classes (Creswell, 2009; Maree, 2010). The reason for utilising the classroom observational strategy was to validate whether what participants indicated during the interviews in relation to the provision of equal opportunities to learn for all learners regardless of their racial backgrounds actually happened.

Qualitative field observations are detailed descriptive recordings as field notes of events, people, action, and objects in settings (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). Thus, I documented comprehensive field notes, with photographs of pictures hanging on the wall in the classrooms and audio recordings captured with permission from participants throughout the classroom observations. This formed the basis for analysis and highlighted issues that were later raised with the teachers during informal conversation. It also helped me observe, identify, and record the presentation of activities in the classrooms. Field notes also helped me to later reflect on what was said in the classroom.

In this study, classroom observation was one of the main data-gathering techniques used. I commenced with classroom observations as soon as the interviews with each of the respective teachers were finished. I observed five lessons of each of the two selected teachers over a period of one month. The lessons that were observed were three Grade 6 and three Grade 7 Social Science classes and two Grade 6 and two Grade 7 English classes. This was intended to familiarise myself and interact with the participating teachers and learners. This also helped me to record the remarkable aspects that could be observed (Creswell, 2003).

The period of observations at the school ran from 16 April 2014 to 28 May 2014. However, between 16 April 2014 to 28 May 2014 there were public holidays (18 April – Good Friday, 21 April – Family Day, 28 April – Freedom Day, 01 May – Labour Day, and 07 May – Public Holiday) when I could not access the school. The data gathered through observations was for the purpose of providing a description of the socio-cultural environment, classroom activities, teaching and learning, most essentially what teachers and learners had indicated during the interviews. Classroom observations offered me with an opportunity to gain an in-depth understanding beyond the interviews, especially of those issues that teachers might not have mentioned during the interviews. During classroom observations, I would normally station myself at the back of the classroom so that I could be as inconspicuous as possible while observing teaching and learning processes. The weakness of observations is that the researcher may appear as intrusive (Creswell, 2009: 179). In relation to my study, it may suggest that even though I was stationed at the back of the classroom, some of the learners



who were not actively participating in the classroom lessons might not have been comfortable to do so because they were being observed.

#### **4.2.5.3 Document analysis**

Document analysis was used to enhance other forms of data collected. The main aim of analysing documents was to examine whether components of these documents (teachers' lessons time-tables, textbooks, school policies, pre-and post-1994 education policies) around teaching and learning focusing on equal opportunities to learning in racially diverse classes could be identified in these documents. Qualitative researchers collect data themselves through scrutinising documents, observing behaviour or interviewing participants (Creswell, 2009). Therefore, during the research process, the researcher may collect qualitative documents like public documents, such as newspaper and minutes of meetings to validate the information gathered through interviews or observations (*ibid.*).

Documents that were analysed in this study included, amongst others, chapters of textbooks used during the teaching and learning, school records in the form of school policies on admission, language and religion, teachers' time-tables, enrolment of learners, as well as the education policies used during the pre- and post-apartheid period. The documents were mostly helpful for recording the processes that took place prior to the study in question. They also provided me with data about the background of the school and the way the school could be supporting teachers to provide racially diverse learners with equal opportunities to learn. The limitations of some of the documents that I have analysed, especially the policies (Education Policy in British Tropical Africa of 1925, Christian National Education Policy of 1948, Bantu Education Act of 1953) that were driving the education system of the school prior to democracy were hard to find as they are old documents, however, they provided me with authentic and accurate information (Creswell, 2009: 180).

#### 4.2.6 Data analysis

Case studies are context specific and qualitative data analysis usually elicits a deeper understanding of a specific context (Neuman, 2011). Qualitative data analysis is an inductive process of organising data into categories and identifying patterns among these categories (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001; Creswell, 2002). A preliminary data analysis was done during the data collection process (Cohen *et al.* 2007). Some of the questions that I asked during the interviews were reformulated to inform my study (Creswell, 2002) and to help the participants to provide detailed explanations of the practices and structures that enable them to provide equal opportunities to learn in their classrooms. During the observations and interviews, I took detailed field notes in which I included my comments, thoughts and views. After spending some time in the field, I read my data and began writing summaries and integrating ideas that emerged (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Cohen *et al.*, 2002).

A more detailed data analysis was done after the interviews, observations and document analysis were completed. By personally transcribing each interview, I could reflect on my own experience of the interview as I listened repeatedly to the voice of the participant and I could straightway reflect on the conversation and make contextual notes in the transcription. As part of data analysis, I took a leaf from Creswell (2002), Creswell (2009) and Maree (2010), that is, I transcribed data from the audiotapes, and the field notes were transformed into electronic text.

The data were then arranged into the file folders (field notes, interview transcripts, and documents). After transcribing and organising data, I read them to obtain a general understanding of the findings (Maree, 2010). I used a coding system to create a description of events for analysis (Maree, 2010; Creswell, 2007; 2002). I took the advice of Archer (1995) and identified the data that belong to the domains of structure, culture and agency. I thereafter categorised data into sections and labelled them in order to express meaning. After the entire text segment had been coded, similar codes were grouped together, and I looked for redundant codes with the aim of reducing the codes to a controllable number (Creswell, 2002). I then combined the themes to see if they reflected an order of events (*ibid.*). Research

results were interpreted and presented according to Archer's Morphogenesis/Morphostasis analytical approach as explained below.

#### **4.2.7 Analytical framework**

In order to analyse the data gathered, I used Archer's Morphogenesis/Morphostasis analytical approach. This framework permitted me to separate the domains of structure, culture and agency. According to Archer (1995), each of these domains has its own emergent properties and powers. For instance, in the structural domain, the emergent properties and powers are called structural emergent properties (SEPs), in the cultural domain they are known as cultural emergent properties (CEPs), while with regard to agency they are termed people emergent properties (PEPs). These three different domains are entangled and dependent on one another and they partly coincide. So, it was critical in this study to examine them distinctly in order to explore and understand their relationships in the context of teaching and learning in racially diverse classes.

Archer's Morphogenesis/Morphostasis analytical framework allowed me to demonstrate how parts (structure and culture) interact with people (agency). That is, the manner in which teachers as the implementers of curriculum operate within a multicultural school is as a result of the school's structural system and socio-historical context (structure and culture) with its related enabling or constraining agential aspects. This implies that the provision of equal opportunities to learn in racially diverse classes might be enabled or hindered by the school's structural system and its socio-historical context. Teachers then bring to these structures (such as school policies, timetabling, number of learners in the class) which have their own SEPs, their own understandings, values, beliefs, experiences and ideas about how to teach in racially diverse classes and what their role is in terms of teaching and learning. Teachers are able to exercise their agency within this structured setting framed by their particular beliefs utilising their PEPs in racially diverse classrooms in terms of their approaches to teaching and learning by virtue of their roles and positions as teachers.

### 4.3 Trustworthiness of the study

In answering and addressing the research questions, validity of qualitative research is judged by its findings' worthiness, truthfulness, appropriateness, authenticity, dependability, credibility and trustworthiness (Cohen *et al.*, 2007). Thus, "*...in qualitative data, validity might be addressed through the honesty, depth, richness and scope of the data achieved, the participants approached, the extent of triangulation and the disinterestedness or objectivity of the researcher*" (*ibid.*:133). Qualitative validity implies that the researcher checks for the accuracy of the research findings by using certain procedures such as triangulation, member checking, rich and thick description, and prolonged time in the field (Creswell, 2009). In this study, member checking was done by taking interview transcripts back to the interviewees to verify the information that I had recorded during the interviews.

Data trustworthiness is the research rigor and evidence which qualitative researchers use to prove to scholars that their findings are genuine and therefore merit the equal credit given to positivist data (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). *Trustworthiness* of data therefore addresses issues of credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability, which are the equivalent to internal validity, external validity, reliability and objectivity respectively in quantitative research design. Credibility (or what is internal validity in quantitative research) is judged in qualitative research by the extent to which data analysis considers the social and cultural contexts in which the data were gathered (*ibid.*).

In order to achieve reliability of my data, I checked the transcripts to ensure that they did not have evident mistakes that I might have made during data transcription and I also compared data obtained through different data collection methods (Creswell, 2009). To attain data trustworthiness in this study, I made use of triangulation of research instruments, that is, I made use of more than one method of data collection such as semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and documents analysis. I also used prolonged time in the field (I spent two and half months in the field), I used verbatim transcriptions, rich and thick

description during data analysis, and selection of relevant participants (Creswell, 2003; Lemmer & van Wyk, 2004; Moss, 2004).

With regard to triangulation, I made use of semi-structured interviews, classroom observations and documentary analysis. I first interviewed the participants using similar questions and then went into the classrooms to observe whether or not teachers provide equal opportunities to learn to learners who come from diverse racial background. The aim was to confirm whether what was indicated by teachers during interviews actually happens in the classrooms. As stated earlier, I also analysed documents such as chapters of textbooks that were used during teaching and learning and each teacher's timetable to check how much time was allocated to each lesson. I have further looked at the vision and mission of the school (2009), the school's Code of Conduct (2013), Language Policy (1998), Religious Policy (2013), and other policies related to education (Education Policy in British Tropical Africa of 1925, Christian National Education Policy of 1948, Bantu Education Act of 1953) as well as the discipline system (2013) that the school has in place to ensure that learners behave in an appropriate manner. The main aim of analysing school documents and policies was to find out if they support the provision of equal physical access to the school and opportunities to learn in racially diverse classes.

Field notes and audio-recorded data were compared with data collected from interviewees. The approach of non-participant observation which involved a combination of in-depth interviews and field notes and document analysis as a method of backing up evidence was also utilised to substantiate and make data reliable. I continually read the data to see if segments, descriptions and explanations provided a clear picture of the situation at the participating school in terms of the provision of equal opportunities to learn in racially diverse classes. My intention was to see if the information gathered made sense and I found that it provided a clear description in relation to the mechanisms that enable or constrain the provision of equal opportunities to learn in the classrooms comprising of learners who come diverse racial backgrounds.

The main weakness of the qualitative research approach is that the findings cannot be extended to other populations with the same degree of certainty that quantitative analysis can. This is because the findings of the research are not tested to discover whether they are statistically significant or due to chance (Kraus, 2005). In addition, the aim of qualitative research analysis is a comprehensive detailed description, no effort is made to allocate frequencies to the verbal features which are identified in the data (Healy & Perry, 2000). This implies that findings of qualitative research are not numerically presented but are presented in the form of narratives.

#### **4.4 Ethical considerations**

The study of whether or not teachers provide equal opportunities to learn in racially diverse classrooms was very complex because it required the participants' experiences and understanding of learners' diverse racial backgrounds. It was therefore essential to interview the participants and observe the presentation of their lessons in the classroom in order to find out whether they provide equal opportunities to learn in a class consisting of learners who come from diverse racial backgrounds. For this reason, it was critical to consider ethical issues. Maree (2010) explains that it is necessary to obtain clearance from an ethics committee when human subjects are involved in any kind of research of an empirical nature. Likewise, Creswell (2009), specifies that researchers need to have their research plan reviewed by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) on their college and university campuses. The IRB process needs to evaluate the potential risk such as physical, psychological, social, economic or legal harm to participants in a study (*ibid.*). I took the advice of Creswell (2009) and applied for an ethical clearance certificate from the University of South Africa's (UNISA) College of Education (CEDU) Research Ethics Committee and the Committee granted me an ethical clearance certificate (See Appendix 1).

It is important that researchers must obtain permission from education departments prior to carrying out any kind of research (Maree, 2010). The Gauteng Department of Education requires researchers to seek permission from their office before commencing with the research process in Gauteng schools (*ibid.*). In light of this, I sought ethical clearance from the

Gauteng Department of Education and the Tshwane South District Office before starting with my research process (See Appendices 2 and 3).

When seeking ethical clearance from the IRB of the university and the education departments, the researcher must develop an informed consent form for participants to sign before they engage in the research (Creswell, 2009; Maree, 2010). Before I could commence with data collection, informed consent was sought from the participants, specifically the school principal, the two teachers, and parents of learners as well as the learners themselves. In the letters of consent, I explained that involvement in the research project was voluntary and confidential (McMillian & Schumacher, 2001; Maree, 2010). I further explained that information that I would gather through interviews, observations and analysis of documents would be used only for the purpose of research and I would not ask them to disclose any information that would expose their identities. Taking guidance from Maree (2010), participants were made aware that they would not be forced to participate in the research project, but they would be allowed to withdraw from the study at any time they felt like withdrawing. The general purpose of the research and the rationale for every step taken were clarified to the participants prior to the commencement of the research process. The two teachers were taken through the research process and informed individually before formal classroom observations began (*ibid.*).

Both the researcher and participant must have a clear understanding with regard to the confidentiality of the results and findings of the research (Burns, 2000). To maintain confidentiality and the identities of the participants and the school, all the information and responses shared during the research process were kept private and the interview transcripts and the results were documented under pseudonyms (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Merriam, 2009; Maree, 2010). The confidentiality of the participants was appreciated and taken into consideration in order to prevent any potential detrimental effects such as breaking rules of cultural values of the study (Bryman, 2004; Maree, 2010)<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> Note that the attached consent letters (see Appendices 4 – 8) are not signed for confidentiality purposes.

## **4.5 Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have explained my pragmatic assumptions, research approach, research design, sampling, data collection methods, data analysis and interpretations, quality assurance measures and ethical considerations. I have also described how I have built evidence, drawing on and integrating various data collection strategies.

In the next three chapters that follow (chapters 5 to 7), I turn my attention to the discussion of the findings, in which I have largely outlined the data in line with the Social Realist approach by emphasising some of the components of teaching and learning in racially diverse classrooms that could be understood to fit into the layers of structure, culture and agency. The main aim was to identify those structures and mechanisms that are believed to enable or constrain the provision of equal opportunities to learn in racially diverse classrooms.



## **CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS ON STRUCTURE**

## 5.1 Introduction

As already stated, this study adopts a Critical Realist approach developed by Bhaskar (1998), which suggests a stratified ontology and an essential philosophical framework that guides the empirical research. The stratified ontology includes the dimensions of the real, the actual and the empirical (*ibid.*). By following this approach, the purpose of the present study is to identify and expose those fundamental structures and mechanisms (at the level of real) that are stimulated to generate events and occurrences (at the level of actual and empirical). As already mentioned, the study also employed Margaret Archer's Social Realist theory (discussed in detailed in Chapter 3), constructed on the meta-theory of Critical Realism, which provides a useful methodological approach in executing social research (Archer, 1995; Bhaskar, 1998). Social Realist theory divides the social world into the layers of structure, culture and agency, which can be scrutinised individually through 'analytical dualism' in order to provide an understanding of their relationship (Archer, 1995).

To understand the interaction between the levels of structure, culture and agency, I used Margaret Archer's morphogenetic framework as an analytical framework. Morphogenesis/Morphostasis refers to change and continuity respectively (Archer, 1995). This approach does not regard the individual over society or the society over the individual. Significantly, society (structure) is inseparable from its social foundations since the very survival of society is influenced by human activities (*ibid.*). Archer further stresses that society is naturally changeable, as it has no unchallengeable form or even a desired state. In this study, society (structure) refers to the multiracial primary school, which has its own culture (ideas, values, theories, rules) and which is made up of agents (that is, school principal, teachers, learners and parents). This suggests that the presence of the school depends upon the activities of the staff members (school principal, teachers and administrators), learners and parents). It also proposes that the school, by its nature, is transformable and the agents (school principal, teachers, learners) are also changeable for what they are and what they perform (teaching and learning). For example, teachers, as implementers of curriculum in the classrooms, are also influenced by the school environment where they teach. The Morphogenesis/Morphostasis framework helped me understand whether there was an

interaction between the structure, culture and agency and whether their interplay has changed or reproduced the school in terms of the provision of equal opportunities to learn in racially diverse classroom contexts.

I begin my discussion of the analysis, in which I have mostly outlined the data according to a Social Realist approach, by highlighting some of the components of teaching and learning that I perceived to belong to the layers of structure, culture and agency. The three domains will be examined separately through what Margaret Archer called ‘analytical dualism’ and accordingly, this chapter will focus on those parts of data that belong to the domain of ‘structure’.

Structures are the mechanisms that come prior to and condition agency in a way they can restrain or allow agents to interrelate with them (Archer, 2007). Through this interaction between the structure and agency, the structure can be transformed or reproduced, dependent on how the structural emergent powers and properties are stimulated. The structural layer comprises those organisational patterns, systems, rules and practices that are found in a school as an institution (*ibid.*). In relation to the present study, the multiracial primary school itself is a structure, and there are the systems within it, such as school governance structures, rules, material resources and policies that are in place to condition the actions of the agents. In this study, I was interested in finding out the extent to which the structures enabled or constrained the provision of equal opportunities to learn in racially diverse classrooms.

## **5.2 Arabia Primary School policies (pre– and post–1994)**

### **5.2.1 The policies that were driving the education system of the school before 1994**

As already indicated, *Arabia Primary School* was established in 1886 (Mr Norman, pers. comm, 6 June 2014). The British educational system was the initial policy that drove the education

system of the school in colonial-era South Africa. This was, according to the school principal, because the majority of learners and teachers were foreign nationals and the majority were from England, hence the British educational system had an influence on the education system of the school. However, this system or policy was changed in the late 1940s when the National Party came to power, implementing its apartheid policies of government. In November 1948, the Congress of the National Party adopted a resolution that the country's education policy should follow the Christian National Education (CNE) Policy of 1948 to govern the education of White children (Lebeloane & Madise, 2009). The Bantu Education Act of 1953 was enacted in 1953 and came in effect in January 1954 to govern the education of Black children (Rose, 1965). *Arabia Primary School*, as a school in a white area, had to adopt the South African apartheid era Christian National Education Policy. These policies are discussed in detail below.

#### **5.2.1.1      *The Education Policy in British Tropical Africa (1925)***

The Education Policy in British Tropical Africa was established by the Advisory Committee on the Native Education in the British Tropical African Dependencies. The aim of this policy was to outline the public statement principles which would guide in the improvement of Native Education in Africa. This policy came into being because South Africa was colonised by the British. The policy stated that education should be modified to the mentality, aptitudes, occupations and traditions of different peoples, preserving as far as possible all sound and healthy components in the fabric of their social life; modifying where necessary to changed conditions and progressive ideas, as an agent of natural growth and evolution. In relation to the current study, this policy emphasised that all people, learners in particular, should be provided with the education that was suitable to their abilities and cultures. This implied that education was designed in a way that increased learners' epistemological access and opportunities to learn so as to improve their academic performance. The learners at this time at *Arabia* were all White.

The policy further indicated that education was to aim at raising up capable, trustworthy, public spirited leaders of the people, belonging to their own race. This revealed the racial bias

of the policy. It stipulated that education was intended to narrow the gap between the educated class and the rest of the community. The task of education was to equally raise the standard of character and efficiency of the majority of people. This suggests that the main aim of education according to this policy was to provide people of diverse racial groups in their respective education facilities with equal opportunities to learn so that they were equipped with knowledge in order to be the productive peoples of the world. In relation to the present study, this means that the provisions of opportunities to learn under this policy were discriminatory against Black learners as they were perceived as lacking the same mental capabilities as their White counterparts.

#### ***5.2.1.2 Christian National Education (CNE) of 1948***

In 1939, the Federasie van AfrikaanseKultuurverenigings (FAK) (literally translated as Federation of Afrikaans Cultural Organisation) organised a Volkskongres (literally translated as “national congress”) on CNE (Lebeloane & Madise, 2009). This in turn resulted in the formation of Instituut vir Christelike Nasionale Onderwys (literally translated as Institute for Christian National Education). From 1948, the education policies and laws in White South Africa were influenced by the Christian National Education (CNE). This Institute published a declaration document which laid out the principles of CNE. CNE was the official ideological position of Afrikaner nationals on education. There have consistently been two central features in its development, the first feature being that all education should be based on the Christian gospel and the second that humanity was divided into races and that education should reflect these racial differences (Lebeloane & Madise, 2009).

According to the above-mentioned policy, there had to be mother-tongue schools and there was to be no mixing of cultural, religious and racial groups. As such, White children were separated into English- and Afrikaans-speaking groups and these in turn could not be mixed with Black, Indian or Coloured learners. This policy had implications on the admission system of *Arabia Primary School* as it was only serving White English-speaking learners, who were also taught by White English-speaking teachers prior to democracy, and the medium of

instruction was English. In this practice, the policy separated learners according to race and therefore excluded those learners who did not belong to the dominant race in the school. Further, the education systems were different, White schools grooming White children to be leaders and Black learners being groomed to be workers. Notably, Barletta (2008) and Olson (2007) argue that differences between learners' and teachers' culture and language lead to diverse treatment and misevaluation of culturally and linguistically diverse students. Lee (2001; 2003) found that, when teachers shared similar aspects of the language and culture of their learners, learners learnt better because they discussed and interacted in a culturally harmonious way. Thus, in their saying this, the above researchers were not advocating for racial segregation, rather, they were advocating for teachers to understand the cultures and languages of the learners. They were also advocating for the need to have racial diversity among the teachers to enable sharing and understanding/acceptance of the different cultures.

Some major Afrikaans-related organisations and Afrikaans speaking households approved the following as the key values of the Christian National Education (CNE) concept:

- The instruction and education of the children of European parents should be based on their parents' life view of the world. The life view of their parents should have Christian foundation based on the Holy Scripture.
- Educational instructions should be conducted through the mechanisms of religious instruction, mother-tongue instruction, civil education instruction, Geography and History.
- No double medium schools – all groupings in South Africa should be separately accommodated.
- Educational instruction for adults, particularly Europeans and Afrikaans speaking citizens, should be given on the principle of cultural apartheid and on the basis of Christian National attitude to life.
- Education of Coloured and Black people are regarded as a subdivision of the vocational task of the Afrikaans Speaking Afrikaner to Christianise non-Europeans of the country. Education of Blacks is based on Europeans' attitude to life and to the world. However, mother-tongue as basis for instruction was accepted and it was recommended that two official languages of the country (Afrikaans and English) also be instructed (van Eeden & Vermeulen, 2005:3).

The above principles reveal that the education of White (Afrikaans and English) children was appreciated and viewed as more superior to that of African, Coloured and Indian children. These principles also encouraged the separation of education facilities for diverse racial groups so that English and Afrikaans speaking people were able to preserve their cultures, particularly because the medium of instruction was their mother tongue, unlike in the schools for Blacks, Coloured and Indian children who were taught in languages foreign to them. The proposed Christian values embedded in this policy were used as mechanisms to discriminate against other racial groups. The principles entrenched in this policy, therefore, had implications for the structure of *Arabia Primary School*, as it was used to serve a single racial group (White learners) and the medium of instruction was English. This practice on the surface appears to suggest that the provision of opportunities to learn were equal for all learners at school level because learners were taught in their native language and their epistemological access was enhanced. However, the reality is that, in the broader national context, the use of different education systems according to race led to the exclusion of learners from other races in schools and the unequal resourcing of schools in the different education systems and did not translate to equal opportunities to learn. If a school excludes learners because of their race, it is not providing equal opportunities to learn for that learner compared to those learners that it includes.

#### **5.2.1.3     *The Bantu Education Act, No. 47 of 1953***

The then National Party government came to power in South African in 1949. The National Party education policy, called Bantu Education, was strongly segregationist and based on cultural differences intensified by racial superiority. This policy governed the education of Black South African children while Coloured Persons Education Act No. 47 of 1963 and Indians Education Act No. 61 of 1965 governed the education of Coloured and Indian children respectively. During the time of the research, the staff at *Arabia Primary School* was White dominated, revealing the effects of apartheid on the racial preference of people to be staff. The National Party government had complete control of what was taught in schools, endorsing and perpetuating the ethos of apartheid (Ross, 2008). Bantu Education was designed to provide a separate and inferior education system for African people. The Bantu

Education Act of 1953 (No. 47 of 1953) was aimed at providing Black African children with minimum education skills so that one day they would be employed in semi-skilled labour positions. White education was identical in all the four provincial departments of education that catered for the White population and the education policy was Christian National Education discussed above (Cross & Chisholm, 1990). The learner-educator ratio in Black schools and schools serving Indians and Coloured learners was higher than the learner-educator ratio in White schools due to a shortage of classrooms and teachers, which resulted in overcrowded classrooms and a high failure rate (*ibid.*). The average teacher-to-learner ratio was 1:18 in White schools, 1:24 in Indian schools, 1:27 in Coloured schools and 1:39 in Black schools (Cross & Chisholm, 1990; Ocampo, 2004). This situation contributed to the mass migration of learners from mainly dysfunctional Black schools to White managed schools referred to as former Model C schools in post-1994. Educational challenges such as unequal access to school, unequal educational opportunities, insufficient funding, inadequate facilities, lack of education materials in Black African schools, and poor-quality teaching staff happened under Bantu Education and the effects are still being felt today. In other words, the African children were receiving inferior education compared to the educational programmes that their White counterparts enjoyed in schools such as *Arabia Primary School*. It therefore implied that the Bantu Education Act broadened the gap in educational opportunities between diverse racial groups by privileging White schools. Black people were not afforded equal opportunities as those of Whites because of the kind of education that they were provided with.

Under the Bantu Education Department, most of the schools were Black community schools and the Act asserted that Black children were to be taught by their own people and in line with their intellectual, spiritual, cultural and economic development (Rose, 1965). The medium of instruction in Black schools was the mother-tongue and both Afrikaans and English were introduced in the first year of primary school, i.e., in the former Standard III (now called Grade 5). In White schools, the medium of instruction was either English or Afrikaans (Rose, 1965).



In relation to the present study, the findings show that *Arabia Primary School* was well equipped with material resources, such as LTSM, the CAMI programme and the *e-learning* centre, and all teachers possessed the required teacher qualifications. Since the school was established during the apartheid era, it was well furnished with teaching and learning resources and with qualified teachers since it was designed to cater for White learners only. By emphasising the separateness of learners of diverse cultures and race, the Bantu Education Act had implications for how the *Arabia Primary School* was structured in order to ensure all White learners were privileged to receive education of high quality and were provided better equal opportunities to learn as they were taught in their own mother-language and shared a similar cultural background with their teachers. The learners at this school were privileged by having more opportunities to learn compared to their Black, Coloured and Indian counterparts. The reason why White learners received instruction in a single language was to preserve their cultural identity. The school excluded learners of other races and therefore in that way did not provide equal opportunities to learners from diverse racial backgrounds to learn.

#### **5.2.2 Policies driving the education system of the *Arabia Primary School* after 1994**

In the post-apartheid era, the South African Schools' Act (SASA) 84 of 1996, Gauteng Education Policy Act 12 of 1998 and Gauteng Education Laws Amendment Act 5 of 2011 are the main policies that have driven the education of *Arabia Primary School*. Other post-apartheid policies in the school included the national school curriculum, namely National Curriculum Statement (NCS) Grade R – 12, which was replaced by the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) and later the Curriculum Assessment and Policy Statement (CAPS) Grade R-12. Mr Norman indicated that the school's Admission Policy, the Language Policy and the Religious Policy were aligned with SASA, while CAPS was being implemented in the classrooms. These policies are discussed below.

### **5.2.2.1 The South African Schools' Act, 1996**

The main objective of the current South African Schools Act (SASA), 84 of 1996 was to provide an identical system for the organisation, governance and funding of schools. The Act stated that the new national system for schools amended previous injustices and encouraged the rights of learners, teachers and parents and instituted the obligations and responsibilities of the Government (SASA, 1996). Section 3 (1) of the Act encourages parents to ensure that their children attend school. Learners are mandated by the Section 3 (1) of the Act to attend school from the age of seven years until the age of 15 years. Moreover, Section 3 (5) of the Act specifically states that if a child fails to attend the school, the Head of Department (HoD) may investigate the motives behind failure to attend school and take suitable actions. If a child continues to be absent from school, parents must be supplied with a written notice. This implies that education is compulsory for all children in the country, unlike in the previous regime where education was made compulsory for White children only. If children fail to attend school in the current regime, parents must be held accountable. In relation to the present study, it appears that the Act had implications for the admission system of *Arabia Primary School* as the school had opened its admission to all learners in its vicinity irrespective of their race, gender and socio-economic status. As already indicated in Chapter 4, the school was a former White school and, during the time of this study, data revealed that the number of Black African learners enrolled was higher than the number of learners from other racial groups. This shows that the school's learner enrolment composition had changed compared to the previous regime where it had only White learners.

### **5.2.2.2 The Gauteng Education Laws Amendment Act (GELAA), No. 5 of 2011**

The Gauteng Education Laws Amendment Act (GELAA) of is aligned to SASA, 1996. Section 8 (2) of the GELAA of 2011, states that the MEC of education in the province must ensure that there are sufficient school spaces in order to ensure that every child who resides in the province can attend school. Section 8 (4) stipulates that, if a learner who is subject to compulsory attendance is not enrolled at or fails to attend a school, the HoD may investigate

the reasons the learner is absent from school; take the necessary steps to remedy the situation; and when such remedy fails, a written notice must be issued to the parents of the learner. Furthermore, Section 8 (5) of the GELAA declares that if a parent fails, after a written warning by the HoD, to ensure that the child attends at an appropriate school frequently, he or she shall be found guilty of an offence and be liable on conviction to a fine or imprisonment for up to six months. This shows that it is the responsibility of parents to ensure that their children attend school regularly.

Section 12 of the GELAA further states that a learner may not be denied the opportunity to take part in all school programmes regardless of the non-payment of school fees by his or her parent. The Act specifies that a child may not be ill-treated in any way, such as by suspension from class, verbal or non-verbal abuse, denial of access to cultural, sporting or social activities of the school, the nutrition programme of the school for those who are eligible according to the relevant policy, denial of a school report or transfer certificate, and denial of the right to write tests or examinations. This policy suggests that every learner has the right to education, to all the programmes of the school and to be treated equally irrespective of the socio-economic status of the learner. However, treatment was not the same with regard to the language of instruction in the school (as with the majority of Black learners in South Africa) as the majority of the learners are Black Africans and African languages are not officially recognised by the schools. At the participating school, data revealed that there were learners who had been excused from paying the school fees as their parents could not afford them. Data also indicated that all the learners who were admitted had access to all school programmes and activities and, in case of misconduct by a learner, there was a detention policy in place. The fact that all learners within the vicinity of the school, regardless of race, had access to attend the school and to participate in school programmes and activities implies that learners were given the same treatment and were provided with equal physical access to the school as a learning facility.

Moreover, Section 13 (1) of the GELAA stipulates that the governing body of a public school should determine the language policy of the school informed by the Constitution and SASA,

in alignment with any norms and standards for language policy in public schools as decided by the Minister in consultation with the Department. Section 13 (2) of the Act states that the governing body must submit a copy of the public school's language policy to the Member of Executive Council (MEC) for vetting and noting within 90 days of coming into the office. Learners shall be encouraged to utilise a variety of official languages depending on the language policy determined by the governing body of the school. In relation to the present study, data indicated that the language of learning and teaching at the participating school was English. *Ms Petersen* and *Ms Osteen* explained it as follows:

*"Look, this is an English medium school, so all methods, the language of instruction is English, all teachings are done in English, all referencing are done in English, so there is nothing that we say, ok, we going to speak in the language of your culture or race, and we don't, everything is done in English"* (*Ms Petersen*, pers. comm, 16 April 2014).

*"...Ever since I have been here, English has been used as a medium of instruction and Afrikaans has been used as the first additional language"* (*Ms Osteen*, pers. comm, 27 May 2014).

The above excerpts confirmed that the medium of instruction at *Arabia Primary School* was English. However, this implied that the majority of non-first language English speaking learners were not provided with equal opportunities to learn in comparison with first language English language speaking learners as their languages were not recognised and used as a medium of instruction at the school, and neither were they considered as second official languages at the school. The latter benefitted more in terms of epistemological access and understanding than the former. This suggests that the language of instruction was a constraint to the provision of equal opportunities to learn, since the majority of learners at this school were Black African learners and their indigenous languages were different from the language used for teaching and learning and the first additional language used at the school.

Section 15 of the GELAA further makes a provision that the duty of the governing body is also to determine the religious policy of the school guided by the Constitution and SASA in consultation with the Department. The GELAA states that the religious policy of the school must be developed within the framework of the following principles:

- The education process should aim at the development of a national, democratic respect of South African's diverse cultural and religious traditions.
- Freedom of conscience and of religion shall be respected at all public schools.

Section 27 of the GELAA also stipulates that the governing body of the public school must establish a school fund and administer it in line with the guidance issued by the HoD. All money received, including school fees and voluntary contributions, must be paid into the school fund. The school fund and any other assets of the public school must be used only for educational purposes, the performance of the functions of the governing body or other educational purposes agreed between the governing body and the HoD. In line with the present study, data showed that the SGB, as the governance structure of the school, was actively involved in the education of their children. For instance, they came up with the idea of buying a CAMI programme that supported all learners in terms of reading and mathematical skills. This means that the SGB of the school had emergent powers to enable the provision of equal opportunities to learn since they decided to buy a programme that benefited all learners regardless of their race, culture or socio-economic backgrounds.

#### **5.2.2.3    *The Gauteng Education Policy Act (GEPA), 1998 (Act No.12 of 1998)***

The Gauteng Education Policy Act of 1998 specifies that the Member of Executive Council (MEC) is responsible for deciding on the education policy for the province. At school level, the governing body is in charge of determining the education policy for its school and the principal coordinates the implementation of education in the school and submits quarterly, annual and other reports to the governing body. In relation to this, the principal as an instructional leader, is working together with the SMT as well as the SGB to ensure that the provision of quality education takes place. The SMT, led by the school principal, is responsible for supporting teachers in terms of curriculum implementation to ensure that quality teaching and learning take place. The school's SMT also ensures that teachers are always in the classrooms delivering lessons. The implementation of GEPA at the chosen school had implications in terms of ensuring that the school principal and SMT facilitated the implementation of the prescribed curriculum. This indicates that the governance structure of the school had

emergent powers to enable the provision of equal opportunities to learn irrespective of their race by making sure that teachers delivered the curriculum in ways that will enable learners to succeed.

#### **5.2.2.4 *The admission policy of Arabia Primary School***

Section 5 (5) of the SASA states that the admission policy of the public school must be decided by the SGB. The *Arabia Primary School's* admission policy states that learners must be admitted without unfair discrimination and no child may be refused admission due to inability to pay school fees. It also stipulates that, if a child is refused admission, the HoD must inform the parents of the rationale behind the rejection in writing. This implies that the participating school admitted learners notwithstanding their race, gender, ethnicity and socio-economic background. The school's admission policy was aligned with SASA and the Gauteng School Education Policy. As already indicated, the school was a fee-paying school, though at the time of the study there were learners whose parents could not afford to pay school fees. This revealed that the school did not discriminate against learners in terms of admission based on their socio-economic backgrounds as it also accepted learners whose parents were unable to pay school fees. It also suggests that the admission policy of the school was an enabling mechanism that ensured that all learners had equal opportunities to access the school as a learning facility. However, this does not necessarily translate to equal opportunities to learn since physical access does not necessarily equate to epistemological access.

#### **5.2.2.5 *The language policy of Arabia Primary School***

Section 6 of the SASA states that the Minister of Education has the right to decide on the norms and standards for language policy in public schools and that the SGB establishes the language policy of the school in compliance with these norms and standards (SASA, 1996). The language policy of *Arabia School* specified that the members of SGB had, in agreement with the requirements of the law (Gauteng Education Laws Amendment Act, 2011; the SA

Constitution, SASA, 1996), decided that the language of learning and teaching be English with Afrikaans as the first additional language. The school policy stated that in the first grades (Grades 1 and 2) of the Foundation Phase learners were taught in one approved language, which was English. From Grade 3 onwards, all learners were compelled to take the language of learning and instruction (English) and at least one additional approved language as a subject, which was in this case Afrikaans. The policy also stated that the teaching of both English and Afrikaans (first additional language) were allocated equal time, funds and allocation of utilities. From Grades 1 to 4, learners' progress was based on performance in language and mathematics, while from Grades 5 to 7 learners must pass at least one language. However, the majority of learners at this school were Black Africans, and both English and Afrikaans were not their native languages. This meant that those learners whose home language was either English or Afrikaans benefitted in terms of knowledge and understanding when they received teaching in these languages compared to the majority of learners whose home languages were not utilised at school. It therefore suggests that the language policy of the school was a constraining mechanism in terms of the provision of equal opportunities to learn because the majority of learners were taught in alien languages and their epistemological access was therefore limited.

#### ***5.2.2.6 The religious policy of the school***

Section 7 of the SASA gives learners the right to observe or practice religious activities at public schools. The religious policy of the participating school indicated that the best interests in terms of education of learners should be attended to and that they may not unfairly or unjustly discriminate against any learner or educator on any grounds. This implies that no learner or educator will be marginalised in any school activity based on his or her religion. The study found that the teaching of Religious Education at the participating school was done in combination with the Life Orientation and Social Sciences Learning Areas of the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) for Grades R-9. The analysis of the religious policy revealed that the educators and administrative staff were allowed to take special leave to go and observe a religious holiday or festival. It also provided that learners were permitted to participate in religious holidays or festivals. In this case, parents had to inform the principal

in writing well in advance of their intention to take certain school days off for the purpose of observing a religious holiday or festival.

In cases where learners had been absent due to a religious holiday or festival, the policy specified that arrangements were to be made to ensure that the affected learners were able to catch up with their academic programme. The fact that learners who were absent from school due to religious activities were provided with an opportunity to catch up with their schoolwork indicated that the school was committed to ensuring that all learners were provided with equal opportunities to learn and that they progressed to the next grade.

The religious policy of the school emphasised that religious observances could be carried out provided they were done on an equitable basis and attendance at these observances by learners and staff members was based on non-discrimination and was voluntary. The policy also stated that school assemblies were to be utilised as environments for celebrating religious and cultural diversity in conjunction with the values of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa. It permitted learners to take part in religious activities at school as long as these did not interfere with or disturb school activities and did not violate the rights of other learners or educators and/or the Constitution. Even though educators were allowed to participate in religious activities, the policy indicated that they had to be objective about religious differences in the execution of their duties. Above all, teachers were to treat all diverse religious and cultural traditions with fairness and respect. The policy further highlighted that educators could not engage in or lead religious activities of learners during their contact time. This shows that the school was trying to ensure that there was equity and equality in terms of conducting diverse religious and cultural activities.

The school's religious policy allowed learners to wear and/or utilise religious symbols or attire at school. The symbols were permissible provided they were utilised as examples of cultural or religious heritage and/or as teaching aids in the classroom. It also permitted learners to wear religious symbols or attire provided that they applied to the school to do so and provided



that they furnished proof to the school principal of the religious significance of those symbols. The policy further highlighted that the school could not select religious attire of a particular religion for prohibition or regulation provided that the attire did not symbolise practices that were in conflict with the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa. This ensured that there was objectivity and fairness with regard to the implementation of the policy and religious discrimination was not entertained. The policy provided a basis for the provision of equal opportunities to learn to learners from diverse racial backgrounds. For instance, in case religious symbols were used as samples of teaching aids in the classrooms, this implied that learners whose religious or cultural symbols were utilised and those who already have information about the topic would absorb more knowledge and understanding about the subject matter compared to other learners, thus opportunities to learn were not equal for all learners. However, even those who might not have prior knowledge about the religious or culture different from theirs would have an opportunity to learn about that particular religion or culture. This suggests that the schools' religious policy has a potential to enhance equal opportunities to learn about diverse religions or cultures.

The findings also revealed that Heritage Day was a mechanism that was being utilised as a platform to observe various cultures and traditions. The school celebrated Heritage Day, where learners showed off their traditions and cultures. On Heritage Day, learners sang cultural songs, performed cultural dances and made speeches. This took place for the entire week. The principal, *Mr. Norman*, explained that during that week learners talked about different things such as how they celebrated weddings, how they carried out funerals, and how they greeted adult people in their respective cultures. Celebrating Heritage Day helped learners to know where they came from, to respect and understand each other's cultures and traditions, as well as accommodate each other. *Mr. Norman* stated that it was the parents who suggested that learners be given an opportunity to share information about their culture so that would do not forget where they come from. He explained the manner in which the school celebrates cultural or Heritage Day in the passage below:

*"On the cultural day learners make cultural festival, they sing cultural songs; they make cultural dances and speeches for the whole week. You come and brag about your culture, but that's also part of the master plan. Then the children see that diversity is nothing. Your wedding, my wedding, mine is still two days and yours is one day but we are still celebrating,*

*and they tell other children what they do on their funerals so that they can learn and respect others. The weddings, the food, this and that yes, they love it and they all dress up all colourful and everything. So that is part of our diversity to bring them together to respect one another. In other words, is to accommodate one another, I don't have to look down on you because you come from Kwa-Zulu Natal or you come from Russia, this place or that place we must respect each other and we must enjoy each other. The cultural week, know your roots week, know your roots because in our meetings with our parents we said guys, the parents said guys you know what you are moving so fast and you move so fast forward in terms of technology that our children don't know where they come from because in this education, in this e-learning, in this vision, in this we are moving away from our roots our young generation will not know where they come from" (Mr Norman, pers. comm, 6 June 2014).*

It is interesting to note that parents were agents who had powers to stimulate the action of the teachers and learners. From the above excerpt, it appears that they suggested that Heritage Day be celebrated by teachers and learners so that various cultures and traditions could be exhibited. Although the school was an English medium school and majority of teachers were Afrikaans-speaking, parents still wanted to preserve their traditions by ensuring that their children had knowledge about their heritages and customs. This implies that parents had emergent powers to decide the way the school functions in terms of making sure that racially diverse learners were provided with equal opportunities to learn about each other's traditions and cultures.

#### **5.2.2.7 Curriculum Assessment and Policy Statement (CAPS)**

The Curriculum Assessment and Policy Statement (CAPS) is an amendment of the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) and the amendments came into effect in January 2012. Each Learning Area in every grade has its own CAPS policy document. The policy document for each Learning Area provides information on what teachers are required to teach and how they should assess in each grade. CAPS was aimed at reducing the administrative burden on teachers and making sure that there was clear direction and uniformity of educational activities and processes for teachers when teaching. In other words, CAPS guides teachers in each Learning Area and grade on what to teach, how to teach, what material resources should be used for teaching, as well as how to conduct an assessment on the subject matter.

CAPS teaching resources provide teachers with weekly preparations and teachers have a teachers' guide that assists them in this regard. Teaching resources for every grade and Learning Area also provide a framework for other additional documents or resources that are required in delivering particular lessons. This suggests that CAPS endeavours to provide learners with information and understanding of subject matters so that they are equipped for the education at the institutions of higher learning and/or the workplace. However, the analysis of some of the lessons presented by teachers using CAPS teaching and learning resources revealed that some of the topics covered such as *"Yesterday's history and tomorrow mystery"* and *"Africans being slaves in Europe"* did not provide equal opportunities to learn in racially diverse classrooms as they only focused on particular racial group/s. This meant that some of the themes contained in the policy constrained the provision of equal opportunities to learn in racially diverse classrooms as some of the learners' race or cultural backgrounds were not symbolised. However, the findings here do not necessarily provide a comprehensive view and sufficient information to assess the whole curriculum in relation to equal opportunities to learn.

### **5.3 Open access, school staff and learner composition**

As already indicated above, during the apartheid days it was common due to the school's location in a White area, that all the teachers and learners were White. Black African learners were excluded due to the apartheid education policies that perpetuated racial segregation. This for me depicts what Archer (1995) called T<sup>1</sup>, which is the start of the process, that is, it is the structural setting into which agents (teachers and learners) were born or came into. Agents do not choose this situation, but it is the context that conditions their actions (Archer, 1995). This implies that the education system during the apartheid period required schools to serve racially separated learners who were taught by teachers of similar racial background. As already indicated at the beginning of this chapter, the Bantu Education Act, No. 47 of 1953 and Christian National Education Policy of 1948 had implications on the enrolment policy of the selected school as then they were not promoting racial integration in schools, hence the learner enrolment and staff members were all White.

At the onset of independence in 1994, the democratic Republic of South Africa's new Constitution advocated that the education system be transformed in line with the principles of dignity, human rights and freedom, non-racism and non-sexism. This transformation of the education policy landscape enabled access to a basic education for all through a provision that everyone has 'a right to a basic education' (Constitution of RSA, 1996, Section 29), including 'adult basic education', without discrimination. The post-apartheid Constitution laid the foundation for the education system to undergo transformation with the aim of undoing apartheid policies, structures and establishing an integrated education system. The organisational structures from nineteen racially and ethnically separated departments of the apartheid era had to be amalgamated and redesigned to promote racial integration (Department of Education, 2001). Through the transformation of the education system in post-apartheid South Africa, racial integration was introduced and learners from various racial backgrounds were permitted to attend schools of their choice. The South African Schools Act (SASA) (Act No. 37 of 1996) ensures that all learners have the right to access quality education without segregation and makes schooling compulsory for children aged 7 to 18 years. This was meant to redress the injustices and inequalities of the past era, where the provision of education was not equal for all learners, that is, White learners were more privileged as they were receiving good quality education compared to learners of other racial groups (Black, Coloured and Indians). In line with SASA, every public school in South Africa is outlawed from refusing learners admission to schooling on the basis of their race or disability.

As can be seen from the above, one of the main objectives of the education transformation policies in post-apartheid South Africa was to change the imbalances of the past in relation to access to and provision of education to learners and to facilitate equity of access to basic education. This structural mechanism appears in a particular way in relation to *Arabia Primary School*, which has led to substantial transformation of its admission policy, ensuring that an increased number of learners from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds are now able to gain entry to the school. After 1994, the school saw a transformation in terms of the admission of learners and employment of teachers from diverse racial backgrounds. This to me symbolises  $T^2$  and  $T^3$  (Archer, 1995), where socio-cultural interactions take place, which can lead to

change or reproduction in structures/cultures. In this study, I believe the transformation of the education system led to transformation of the school policies to enable admission of racially diverse learners and teaching staff, thereby changing the school structure in terms of racial composition.

With regards to the enrolment of learners during and post the apartheid period, the school had the following numbers of learners (see Figure 6 below):

**Figure 6: Learner enrolment between 1993-1996**

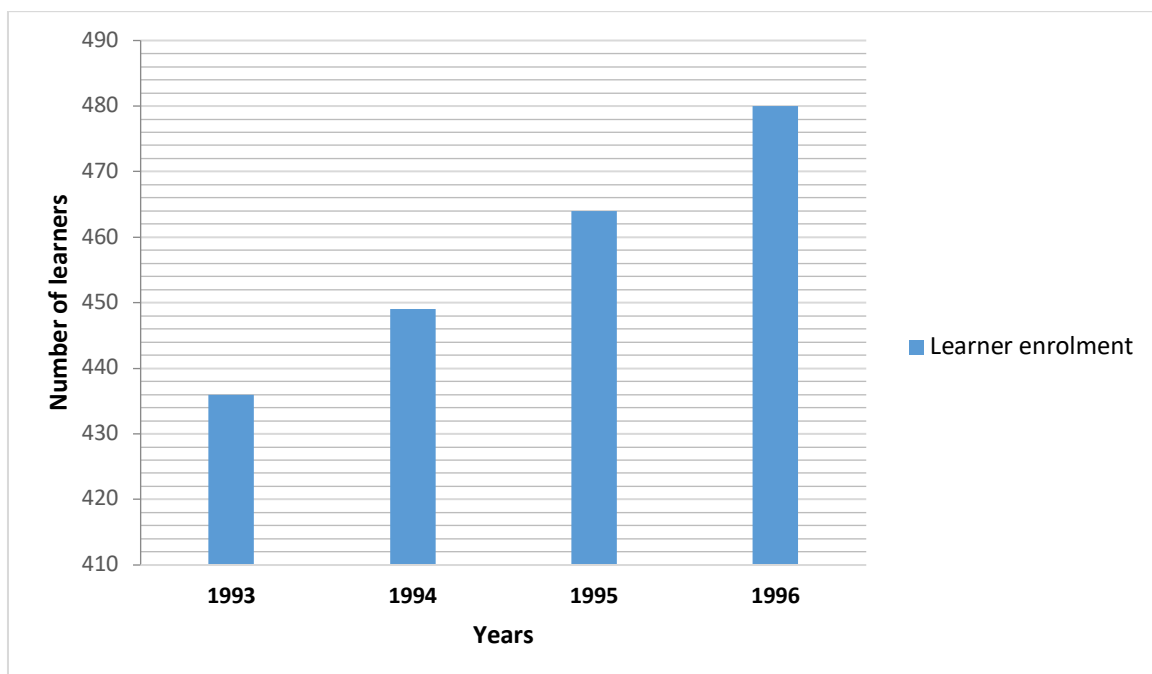
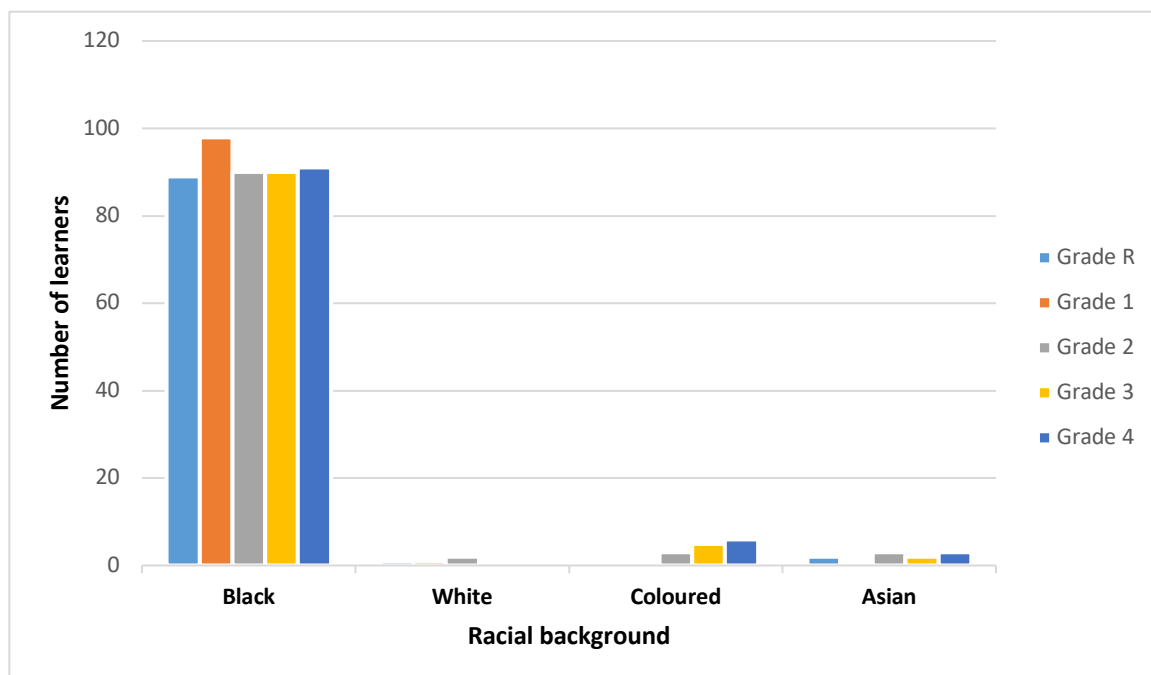


Figure 6 reveals that the number of learners has been increasing since 1993. For instance, the school had 436 learner enrolments in 1993, which increased by 13 in 1994, then by 28 learners in 1995, and had increased by 18 learners in 1996. Although minimal, the increase was influenced by opening access to all learners regardless of their racial backgrounds.

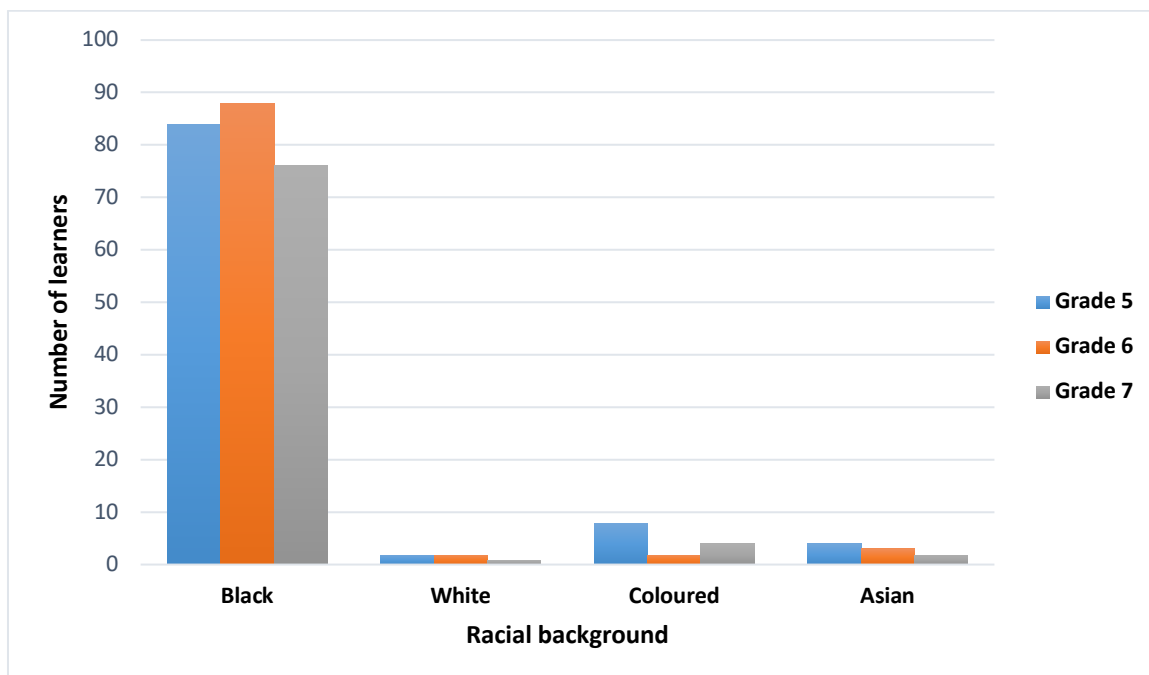
The change in education policies led to transformation regarding racial diversity of learners and teachers after independence in 1994. Prior to 1994, the school had all White teachers and learners. However, after 1994, while the majority of teachers were still White, the

majority of learners had changed to Black Africans. During the time of this study the school had 62 educators. Of the 62 educators, 26 were employed by the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE) while the remaining 36 were employed by the School Governing Body (SGB). The teacher population was composed of eight Black African males, three Black African females, two Indian females and the rest (49) were all white. These figures indicate that the teaching staff was still predominantly white (79%) even after the apartheid period. This could be due to the fact that it takes time to change staff composition because the department in some cases has to wait until there is a vacancy left by a White teacher in order to employ teachers from formerly disadvantaged communities. The SGB was comprised of ten members of which four were Whites, three were Black Africans, two were Coloured while one was Asian. The school consisted of 763 learners during the period of this study. According to the principal, of the 763 learners, 600 of them reside in areas near the school and the rest come from as far as Pretoria West, Pretoria East, Mamelodi and Atteridgeville while others come from outside South Africa. Figures 7 and 8 below illustrate the enrolments of learners by race and by grades during the time of this study:

**Figure 7: Grade R - 4 learner enrolment in 2014**



**Figure 8: Grades 5 – 7 learner enrolments, 2014**



During the time of this study the school had 20 learners of Asian descent; nine White learners, 28 Coloured learners, and the majority (706) of the learners were Black Africans (this amounted to 92%). The above figures show that, during the time of the study, the number of registered White learners was small compared to Asian and Coloured learners. This reveals that the enrolment of learners was dominated by Black African learners (92%), followed by Coloureds (4%), Asians (3%) and Whites (1%). With the admission of an increasing number of Black African learners at the school followed by Coloureds, this shows that access has been opened for all learners, but it was the parents' decision to register their children at the school of their choice. Increased access of Black African and Coloured learners at the present school suggests that learners have physical access as the school has enough classrooms to accommodate them. The study further found that White learners relocated to Afrikaans and private schools after 1994 when the new government endorsed the amalgamation of racial diversity of learners in schools, hence the majority of learners at the participating school were Black Africans, although this somehow reflected the demographics of the country. The fact that White learners moved to Afrikaans schools where the language of teaching and learning was Afrikaans revealed that parents of White learners still supported racial segregation in schooling and reinforced it through a different route, that of segregation through the use of

(Afrikaans as) the language of teaching and learning. This was an indication that White families were seeking alternative means to maintain racially segregated schools that were predominantly White to educate their children. However, there are other reasons that influence parents in moving learners which this study did not explore. The relocation of children to maintain racially segregated schools provides evidence that some parents do not want their children to mingle with children of other racial groups in the same schools because they want to preserve their racial identity. This situation further demonstrates how difficult it is to attain racial integration in a country such as South Africa with an apartheid history that was embedded with racism.

The fact that the majority of learners in this school were black Africans, while teachers were predominantly White suggests that there was, to an extent, a mismatch of race and culture between teachers and learners during the time of the study. It can be argued that the fact that White teachers were still dominant has much to do with the past. This was also based on the fact that, in schools where White children have moved to, teachers were predominantly White. The mismatch between teachers and learners appears, to a limited extent, as a constraint to the provision of equal opportunities to learn for learners from diverse racial backgrounds as they were taught by White teachers coming from a different racial and cultural group with limited understanding of the majority of learners' backgrounds. In this scenario, White learners were likely to benefit more from the contents of the lessons in terms of knowledge and understanding as they share similar racial backgrounds with the White teachers. Studies have shown that teachers lack knowledge and understanding of their diverse learners' racial and cultural backgrounds and they therefore find it difficult to teach racially diverse learners (Mapsea, 2006; Moore, 2006; Dagkas, 2007; Fox *et al.*, 2007). This issue of cultural mismatch was observed during the teaching of Grade 7 Social Science lessons where the teacher used code switching (switch from English language to Afrikaans language), which benefited Afrikaans speaking learners in terms of understanding the content of the lesson compared to the non-Afrikaans speaking learners. I found the racial background of the teacher (White) and language (Afrikaans) as mechanisms that affect the provision of equal opportunities to learn who come from diverse racial backgrounds.



*Arabia Primary School* is categorised by the Department of Education as a Quintile 4<sup>9</sup> and Section 21<sup>10</sup> school, which means it is a fee-paying school. However, during the apartheid regime, education for White people was free regardless of whether or not parents afforded school fees compared to the education for other racial groups (Black, Coloured and Indians). After the apartheid era, schools were re-classified according to their levels of poverty. Low-quintile schools (quintiles 1 to 3) were classified as poor schools while quintiles 4 and 5 were classified as the least poor schools. This implies that the *Arabia Primary School* serves learners whose parents can afford to pay school fees. Nevertheless, the interview responses from the school principal (*Mr. Norman*) revealed that the school served learners from varying socio-economic backgrounds. These learners came from the poorest to the richest families. During the time of this study, the school fees per learner were R7,500.00 per annum. *Mr Norman* explained that 48 families were exempted from paying school fees since they could not afford them. He also stated that some of the parents paid school fees per month while others paid for the whole year in advance and those who made payments for the whole year got a 10% discount. The fact that the school accommodated learners who could not afford school fees showed that it did not discriminate against learners based on their socio-economic backgrounds. In this regard, the school's admission system was in line with the SASA (1996), which states that no child may be denied admission due to their inability to pay school fees. Open access to the school therefore appears to be an enabling mechanism in terms of the provision of equal opportunities to learn regardless of their race and socio-economic backgrounds.

Regardless of the commendable objective towards realising racial transformation in basic education in South Africa, there have been some unplanned consequences of broadened access to schooling as a structural mechanism. The majority of learners who were admitted at *Arabia Primary School* were Black Africans and there were few learners from other racial groups. This implies that the school as a structure had been changed in terms of the admission of learners, while the staff complement had not been changed. The latter could pose a

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<sup>9</sup> Quintile system refers to categorisation of schools into one of the five quintiles based on their level of poverty, quintile 1 being the poorest and quintile 5 being the least poor).

<sup>10</sup> Section 21 schools are those schools that manage their own finances.

potential of constraining the provision of equal opportunities to learn to racially diverse learners as these learners were taught by teachers who did not have in-depth knowledge about learners' cultural backgrounds.

#### **5.4 The school governance structure**

*Arabia Primary School* had governance structures in place for the management of the school. The governance structure looked at the finances, safety and security of staff and learners, curriculum implementation and the wellbeing of learners. The ultimate objective of the school governance structures, as indicated by the school principal, was to make sure that quality teaching and learning took place in the classrooms in order to improve learner achievement. The school principal was responsible for making sure that the rules, policies and procedures of the school were developed and implemented so that the school was able to convert its vision and mission into attainable actions and outcomes.

As explained by the principal, the school consisted of the SMT Committee, SGB, Finance Committee, Safety team, Social Welfare team, the learner, teacher, support material (LTSM) team, Grade level team and the Subject/Learning Area team. The main responsibility of these structures was to drive curriculum delivery in the school and to ensure that the school environment was conducive for teaching and learning. For instance, the SMT, as instructional leaders, were led by the principal and were in charge of ensuring that the school curriculum was implemented and improved. The team was also responsible for arranging activities such as workshops and Learning Area and grade level meetings that support teaching and learning. It further ensured that teachers were always in the classrooms delivering lessons.

The study findings revealed that every head of a Learning Area (Head of Department (HoD)) spearheaded a team of educators who specialised in the particular subject or Learning Area or phase and they provided curriculum leadership in that specific Learning Area. The Heads of Learning Areas worked closely with the Subject Specialists from the District Office where

the team discussed activities related to the Learning Areas, how to perform admin functions relevant to the Learning Areas, and coordinate Learning Area related matters. The HoDs for Foundation, Intermediate and Senior Phases regularly met with the District Officials to deliberate about curriculum implementation and the challenges thereof. These governance structures, that is the SMT and HoDs or Learning Area specialists, took the lead in terms of ensuring that educators provide quality teaching and learning in the classrooms. In other words, these structures served to enable the provision of equal opportunities to learn regardless of their racial backgrounds.

The various school structures helped with the management of the school on various areas, viz., finance, safety and learning. Data further revealed that the role of the Finance Committee at the school was to provide financial oversight for the school and to review and monitor the approved budget expenditures on a monthly basis. The Safety team's functions were to ensure the safety of teachers and learners – *"...by directing learners to safety areas in case of emergency, identify vulnerable places at school, keep records of injured persons at school and inform the principal, prevent unnecessary people entering the school, and keep records of daily attendance of teachers and learners"* (Mr Norman, pers. comm. 26 June 2014). The LTSM team's role was to ensure that teaching and learning materials were available for both teachers and learners as well as to make sure that learners returned books when they progressed to the next grade.

The Social Welfare team provided an extensive support network that assisted all learners with their personal, social, emotional and learning needs. The main aim of the Social Welfare team at the school, according to the principal, was to provide a positive, safe and caring learning environment which recognised each and every learner and encouraged them to reach their full potential. *Mr. Norman* elucidated that the team focused mainly on the wellbeing of learners. He stated that the Heads of Social Welfare of each grade met once a week to discuss the wellbeing of learners, that is, the social related problems that learners might have, such as learners who needed food, school uniform, transport, learners with family problems such as parents divorcing, parents in prison, and parents with addiction related problems. The

principal explained that the ten SGB members, which comprised the principal, five parents, three teachers and one non-teaching staff, met once a month to discuss the issues relating to financial management of the school and infrastructure development. Grade level teams and the principal met once a week on Fridays to talk about issues related to learners' work and their performance. The above aspects indicate that the governance structures of the school were available to ensure that the school was a conducive environment for teaching and learning, thus had positive implications on the provision of equal opportunities to learn. *Mr. Norman* put it in this way:

*"Teachers who teach similar Learning Areas do meet three times a week together with their HoDs to discuss challenges that concerns teaching and learning, School Management Team (SMT) meets once a week and sometimes one-on-one with the school principal to discuss specific problems that are related to management or curriculum delivery, three Head of Departments (HoDs) (one for Foundation Phase, one for Intermediate Phase and one for the Senior Phase) meet once a week with relevant teachers in relation to learning areas and curriculum implementation. HoDs also meet with District Officials from different units. Two Deputy Principals and the principal meet every day in the morning. The finance team and safety team as well as academic members meet every Wednesday with the deputies and principal to deliberate on issues related to finance, safety of teachers and learners as well curriculum implementation and academic performance"*

*"Every Wednesday yes, the six of us (2 Deputies, the principal and 3 HoDs) have a meeting because we are the academic watchdogs of the school and the safety watchdogs of the school, the school must be safe, it must be excellent and the finance person must be there, we need money to do things"* (*Mr Norman*, pers. comm. 26 June 2014).

## **5.5 Material resources**

### **5.5.1 The school Master Plan**

The school implemented a 'Master Plan' that was used to eliminate diverse challenges related to numerical, reading and other academic challenges and provided all learners with equal opportunities to learn. It comprised of programmes such as Computer Aided Maths Instruction (CAMI) and "*e-learning*". Through the CAMI and "*e-learning*" programmes, the school was determined to improve learners' academic performance irrespective of their race, culture, gender and socio-economic backgrounds. *Mr. Norman* explained that the programmes also assisted teachers to identify learners who needed remedial lessons and

those who required enrichment in terms of academic performance. The quotation below illustrates how *Mr. Norman* emphasised the importance of the Master Plan:

*“.....in that class sit somebody that lives in the presidency and somebody that lives in Marabastad, are we going to bring this one up or are we going to bring this one down? Or both of them up there? We want both of them up there. Otherwise we will lose this child so if we don’t do that and that is where the big diversity come in and we can say right we are doing this, we are remediating on this side but we are also enriching on this side, but in the meantime, we are still within our Gauteng Department of Education (GDE) policies and it’s just the extra hours, walking the extra mile. The Master Plan as a “spaceship” which goes up, and not up and down” (Mr. Norman, pers. comm., 26 June 2014).*

From the above extract, it is remarkable to notice that the school used a Master Plan as a mechanism to ensure that all learners were provided with equal opportunities to learn in order to improve their academic performance. It is also interesting to note that this mechanism did not focus only on learners who were struggling academically but also supported those learners who were doing well academically.

### **5.5.2 The Computer Centre**

The computer (e-learning) centre served as an instrument that the school utilised to provide all learners with equal opportunities to learn. Data shows that the computer centre was where e-learning was taking place. The computer programme that the school implemented tested the reading skills, spelling, comprehension skills and the speed at which learners could read as well as their mathematical skills. This programme was called *“Readers are leaders”* and it could also determine whether a learner’s reading ability was below or above his or her chronological age. *Mr. Norman* indicated that, since the school was an inclusive school in terms of racial diversity, both the leadership of the school and the parents decided to purchase this programme to address challenges related to academic performance. This implies that this school made efforts in terms of the use of advanced computer programmes in order to provide all learners with equal opportunities to learn and to improve their academic performance. It also suggests that there were good relations between governance structures, that is the SMT and the SGB, as the school managed to buy an advanced computer programme that could benefit all learners regardless of their race, culture, gender and socio-

economic backgrounds. The governance structures therefore had emergent powers to transform the academic performance of learners through internal conversations in which they prioritised their practices with regards to curriculum implementation.

The principal stated that, since the school utilised an improved computer programme, it was one of the leading schools around Pretoria in terms of e-learning. Because of this, other schools visited this school to observe how it implemented e-learning. The main purpose of e-learning, according to *Mr. Norman*, was to provide all learners with an understanding of the subject matters in terms of reading and writing. The e-learning programme also assisted in terms of addressing the academic challenges the learners encountered. However, *Mr. Norman* mentioned some challenges pertaining to the implementation of this programme. For instance, he explained that e-learning required that the lesson plans had to be good enough to re-teach learners who did not understand in class during teaching and learning. With regard to the computer programme assisting learners with reading, spelling and comprehensive skills, and the speed at which learners can read, *Mr. Norman* explained it as follows:

*“...that programme if you are 11 years old and you come from another province, this programme will test you because you come from another province you cannot read English properly, the programme will say “you are 11 years old, but your reading is of a 9 years 2 months child. The programme takes you down, for example, if you are in Grade 5, the programme takes you down to Grade 2 and now the programme brings you up two times. The same programme can also say “wow you are an excellent reader I am putting you to the next Grade. So, I have got Grade 7 who are already at Grade 10 level in terms of reading. With this programme, learners are actually learning while they think they are playing, they enjoy it, they love it and they are actually learning..... for us reading is not reading, you must be able to read and comprehend, you must be able to read with intention, what you read is what you must bring back” (Mr. Norman, pers. comm., 26 June 2014).*

### **5.5.3 Computer Aided Maths Instruction (CAMI) programme**

The school also had a Computer Aided Maths Instruction (CAMI) programme, which helped in language development, maths development and perceptual development. The CAMI programme catered for the Foundation Phase, that is, Grades R to 3 learners. *Mr Norman* elucidated that this programme assisted Foundation Phase learners with special orientation

skills such as amongst others identifying *left, right, big, small, forward, and backward*. He also indicated that the programme helped in identifying learning problems and solving them before learners reach the Intermediate Phase in order to prepare them for the workload in that phase. He further explained that, if a learner was a fast learner, the CAMI programme enhanced his or her understanding of the subject area. He put it as follows:

*“Then we have the master one called CAMI. The CAMI programme is a language development program, a Maths development programme and a perceptual development programme. For the little ones, special orientation like left, right, this and that, big and small, forward and backward because of our diversity in our early child development Grade R to Grade 3 we want to identify problems and solve them before they go into Intermediate Phase and Senior Phase because the workload of Intermediate Phase and Senior Phase is double, three times the amount of work that they do at the Foundation phase, there (Intermediate Phase and Senior Phase) we do not have the time to remediate. But we have in Grades R, 1, 2 and 3 to remediate and that is why we have got CAMI, it is a very expensive programme, it does the same as the very first programme (readers are leaders programme), it can take you down and then the programme will remediate your problem, if you are very clever and fast, the programme will enrich you on that topic you are busy doing”* (Mr. Norman, pers. comm., 26 June 2014).

#### **5.5.4 Remedial classes**

The school carried out remedial classes to address poor learner academic performance. Remedial classes took place in the afternoons. The main aim of these classes was to support learners who might not have grasped the content during the normal school hours. These classes were mainly focusing on Maths and English and were opened to all learners who were struggling academically. *Mr. Norman* put it as follows:

*“We have at the end of the day now, the school is closed now, immediately now our remedial classes start. These classes are mainly focusing on Maths and English and that is for our, not only our international children, it is also for local guys that come from Limpopo, North west, everywhere, to help them if you did not understand this morning’s lesson, about fractions, or verbs or nouns or this. You come to the remedial classes afternoon but now there is only 7 children and a teacher and now the teacher can spend so much more with every child and when that child goes home, he will understand today’s work, he will not go home unless he understands and that is why we are the leading school in Pretoria with e-learning”* (Mr. Norman, pers. comm, 26 June 2014).

All of the above citations reveal that the CAMI and e-learning programmes are mechanisms in place to provide all learners with equal opportunities to learn. They indicated that, as

learners interact with the programmes, they acquire certain skills such as reading and mathematical and comprehension skills that will help them improve their academic achievements. It was remarkable to note that the CAMI programme was able to detect learners with learning difficulties and that the school provided those learners with remedial lessons. This implies that the school as a structure had programmes in place that were accessible by all learners in order to provide them with equal opportunities to learn and to empower them to improve their academic performance.

### **5.6 School venues and the timetable**

There has been a widening access to the school in line with the Department of Basic Education's effort to ensure that there was transformation in basic education in order to correct the imbalances of the past. The findings revealed that the school did not have a challenge with regard to the structural capacity to accommodate racially diverse learners. During the time of the study, the school had three classes per grade and each class had approximately thirty learners. The structural capacity was an indication that the school was able to provide learners with the physical access regardless of their race, culture, and socio-economic backgrounds.

The school time-table was arranged in accordance with National Education Policy (NEP) Act 27 of 1996. The policy stipulated that the actual contact time for both Intermediate and Senior Phases (Grades 6 and 7) was 26 hours 30 minutes per week. The languages were to be allocated 9 hours and 15 minutes per week while Social Sciences were assigned 4 hours per week (see Tables 1 and 2 below).



**Table 1: Time for the Intermediate Phase 2005**

Learning Area	Notional time (%)	Weekly contact time (h)
Language, Literacy and Communication	35%	9h 15 min
Mathematical Literacy, Mathematics and Mathematical Sciences	15%	4h
Natural Sciences and Technology	15%	4h
Human, Social, Economic and Management Sciences	15%	4h
Arts, Culture and Life Orientation	15%	4h
Flexi-time	5%	1h 20 min

**Table 2: Time for Senior Phase (Grade 7) Curriculum 2005**

Learning Area	Notional time (%)	Weekly contact time (h)
Language, Literacy and Communication	20%	5h 20 min
Human, and Social Sciences	10%	2h 40 min
Technology	10%	2h 40 min
Mathematical Literacy, Mathematics and Mathematical Sciences	13%	3h 25 min
Natural Sciences	12%	3h 10 min
Arts and Culture	10%	2h 40 min
Economic and Management Sciences	10%	2h 40 min
Life Orientation	10%	2h 40 min
Flexi-time	5%	1h 20 min

At *Arabia Primary School*, the findings showed that Grade 7 English lessons were allocated nine periods per class per week, while Grade 7 Social Science was allocated 6 periods per class per week. According to the Grade 7 teacher (*Ms Osteen*), these two subjects (English and Social Science) were taught for about thirty minutes per period. The Grade 6 teacher (*Ms Petersen*) indicated that for her English lessons she had lots of double periods (60 minutes), which according to her were sufficient for teaching and learning. For Grade 6 Social Science,

she had one double period per week and the rest of the periods were single (30 minutes) and they were still enough for teaching and learning according to her. Although it appeared that the school time-table was organised according to the NEP Act, the observations made during class visits revealed that the 30 minutes time allocated to the teaching and learning was not enough as the teacher would spend most of the time conveying information regarding past or upcoming tests and the Learning Area projects before the actual teaching and learning could commence. I observed that time was also wasted when learners moved from one class to the other to attend another lesson. This implied that the half an hour period did not enable the provision of adequate opportunities to learn for the learners as it did not appear to be sufficient for teaching and learning purposes.

## **5.7 Conclusion**

In this chapter, I explored the policies influencing the school in the pre- and post-apartheid era. The policies that I scrutinized were the official education policies (Education Policy in British Tropical Africa of 1925; Christian National Education Policy of 1948; Bantu Education Act of 1953; SASA of 1996; GEPA of 1998; and GELAA of 2011) that drove the education system of the school prior to and after democracy. I established that the education policies during the apartheid era denied access to learners from racially diverse backgrounds and segregated learners according to race. They also resulted in disproportionate allocation of resources in favour of White learners and White schools. They therefore did not give equal opportunities to learn to learners from racially diverse backgrounds. I found that, in the post-apartheid era (post-1994), the school's policies such as the language policy, religious policy and the admission policy became aligned to the SASA policy of 1996, GEPA of 1995 as well GSEP of 1998. The post-apartheid school policies were therefore developed to enhance physical access to school to racially diverse learners, provide equal treatment of diverse religious groups and expose learners to diverse cultures and thus increased their epistemological access. However, the language policy was found to be a constraining mechanism in terms of the provision of equal opportunities to learn as the majority of learners were indigenous or non-English speakers, yet the school's medium of instruction was English, with Afrikaans as a first additional language. I argue that the education policies that were driving the school

before democracy laid the foundation for the language of instruction used at this school at the time of this study and that this has not changed regardless of the transformation of learner enrolment in the post-apartheid era. Urbanisation in post-apartheid South Africa has led to more population diversity in settlements making the integration of African languages into learning a complex issue, and this has created space to retain the use of English as a medium of instruction at *Arabia Primary School*.

I further examined the Department of Basic Education's curriculum documents such as CAPS and found that, although they attempt to ensure that every learner irrespective of race, culture, gender, intellectual abilities and socio-economic backgrounds was provided with information on subject matters, some of the topics focused on particular cultural groups, such as western cultures. I established that the CAPS curriculum did not attempt to connect topics in western cultures with the learners' indigenous knowledge, which in turn affects the provision of equal opportunities to learn.

In this chapter, I explained that structures are mechanisms that can enable or constrain those who interact or operate within them. I further expounded on different ways in which different structures of the school itself and the systems within it enable or constrain the provision of equal opportunities to learn. I first examined the policy around open access and provided information on the enrolments of learners at *Arabia Primary School* during and after the apartheid period. This information revealed how increased learner access, particularly for Black African learners, had the unplanned consequence of not also benefitting them in terms of equal access to knowledge as there was no corresponding shift in the racial diversity of the teaching staff at the school. This therefore meant that they were taught by teachers who came from dissimilar racial and cultural backgrounds and who may have lacked an understanding of the cultures of the majority of black learners. In addition, the majority of these teachers had received their qualifications prior to 1994 and they were therefore prepared to teach a single racial group (White learners in the case of *Arabia Primary School*) and not racially diverse classrooms. Likewise, the fact that the majority of Black learners were not taught in their indigenous mother tongue languages and instead were taught in English

as the language of learning and teaching, as well as Afrikaans as second language, put them at a disadvantage in terms of epistemological access. I am surprised at why the vast majority of Black parents have not managed to influence changes on the language policy at schools.

In examining the teaching, material resources (i.e. textbooks) and learning facilities that the school had, I found that, with the available learning facilities, the school was positioned to provide equal opportunities to learn to racially diverse learners. I established that the school had an advanced computer programme that assisted learners with subjects such as Maths and English and that the programme was able to detect learners who had learning problems. The school had remedial classes in place for learners who needed additional academic assistance. I have found that the computer programme as well as the remedial classes were enabling mechanisms in terms of the provision of equal opportunities to learn to racially diverse learners.

Further, I also discussed the school governance structures and established that they were enabling the provision of equal opportunities to learn as their gatherings were mainly about curriculum implementation, teachers' attitudes towards their school work, welfare of learners, safety and security, material resources, and the finances of the school, among other issues.

The school venues were found to be enabling the provision of equal opportunities to learn to all as the school has enough classrooms to accommodate the number of learners (teacher-learners ratio of 1: 25) it had during the study.

The findings from this chapter revealed that the school as a structure has mainly changed in terms of the admission of learners as it has opened access to learners of diverse racial groups. However, the teaching staff has not been significantly transformed in relation to the change in the learner population of the school and was predominantly White. This study could not thoroughly explore this issue. In terms of the provision of equal opportunities to learn, the

findings indicate that some of the structures that were available were affecting the provision of equal opportunities to learn to racially diverse learners. These structures condition certain approaches to teaching and learning, which can also be regarded as a sign of the classroom culture. In the next chapter, I will examine in more detail some of the cultural emergent properties (CEPs) that were identified in this chapter.

## **CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS ON CULTURE**

## 6.1 Introduction

This is the second chapter of the three chapters in which I discuss my findings within the three layers of structure, culture and agency using Margaret Archer's concept of 'analytical dualism' (Archer, 1995). In the previous chapter I discussed my findings focusing on the layer of structure. In this chapter I discuss my findings looking at the layer of culture, which is the ideational facets, engaging in whether these facets enable or constrain the provision of equal opportunities for all learners to learn in racially diverse classes. The focus is on teacher and learner beliefs and values. The purpose is to understand the role of learner and teacher cultures on epistemological access. Further, the chapter looks at the implications of the language of teaching and learning on the provision of equal opportunities to learn.

As I have indicated in Chapter 3, culture refers to systems of meaning such as ideas, values, beliefs that people or societies subscribe to. Culture also entails language, forms of knowledge, traditions and common-sense understanding. It is the outcome of social relations and the cause of certain practices of social relations and can be both constraining and enabling (Layton, 2012). There are cultural emergent properties that develop as, amongst others, ideas, beliefs, values, and rules become part of the cultural setting (Archer, 1995). In the context of the present study, the cultural domain appears in various ways in which teachers state or proclaim their ideas, beliefs, values and understandings of issues such as teaching and learning strategies used in racially diverse classrooms and whether or not they provide equal opportunities to learn. Approaches to teaching and learning and whether or not teachers provide equal opportunities to learn to all racially diverse learners are regularly revealed in how teachers view their learners and their own role as teachers in the context of a racially diverse classroom.

With reference to the Critical Realist theory, these various discourses can be regarded as cultural mechanisms emergent from the layer of the real and having casual properties and powers (CEPs) that can influence or change social practices (Layton, 2012). In relation to the present study, the ideas and beliefs that teachers have about teaching and learning in racially

diverse classes can influence their teaching practices in the classroom. These discourses that teachers have can enable or constrain the provision of equal opportunities to learn to learners who come from racially diverse backgrounds.

The discourses that are stimulated in a particular environment materialise at the actual layer and are experienced at the layer of the empirical. It was my aim in this study to attempt to find out what these discourses were and what cultural emergent properties these might have during teaching and learning and whether or not teachers provide opportunities to learn in racially diverse classrooms (Fairclough, Jessop & Sayer, 2002). In doing this study, I interviewed teachers regarding the teaching and learning strategies and material resources that they employ in a class containing learners who come from diverse racial backgrounds and I observed the classroom lessons in order to understand the interaction between what they said what they do in the classrooms in terms of the provision of equal opportunities to learn. In this chapter, I explore the evidence of the ideas and beliefs that teachers held about teaching and learning in racially diverse classes, particularly the provision of equal opportunities for all learners to learn. It is through investigating these discourses and observing what actually happens in the classrooms in terms of teaching and learning that an understanding can be gained of how the discourses inform the teachers' practices in the classroom context. I will focus predominantly on the dominant discourses that emerge in the classroom contexts while taking into consideration the ideas and beliefs that emerged during face-to-face interviews about teaching and learning approaches that are employed in racially diverse classes and whether or not they provide equal opportunities to learn. According to Archer's (1995) 'analytical dualism', objects are artificially disconnected for analytical purposes in order to explore their interaction. Therefore, within the categories of discourses that were found in the data, there is a certain degree of correspondence and contradiction.



## 6.2 Language as a catalyst for epistemological access

Teachers who participated in the study stated that the school catered for learners who came from diverse races, ethnicities, religions, cultural, and socio-economic backgrounds. Nevertheless, the enrolment of learners indicated that learner population is predominantly Black. Yet teaching and learning takes place in the English language as it is the school's medium of instruction, regardless of learners' racial and cultural backgrounds. Consider the following excerpt from my interview with *Ms Petersen and Ms Osteen*. When asked how she would describe the way the school catered for learners of different cultures, language, religion, socio-economic backgrounds and race, *Ms Petersen* indicated that, since the school was an English medium, every activity, including teaching and communication, was done in English. She responded as follows:

*"Look, this is an English medium school, so all methods, the language of instruction is English, all teachings are done in English, all referencing are done in English, so there is nothing that we say, ok, we going to speak in the language of your culture or race, and we don't, everything is done in English"* (Ms Petersen, pers. comm, 16 April 2014).

In the same way, *Ms Osteen* claimed that the school had been multicultural ever since she joined it in 1995, and that teaching and learning were done in English and Afrikaans was used as the first additional language. *Ms Osteen* responded as follows:

*"The school has been multiracial for as long as I have taught here. I have joined this school in 1995, I have 19 years teaching at this school. Ever since I have been here, English has been used as a medium of instruction and Afrikaans has been used as the first additional language"* (Ms Osteen, pers. comm, 27 May 2014).

Since the majority of learners were indigenous at this school during the time of the study and the school's language of learning and teaching (LOLT) was English, it implies that these learners did not have similar opportunities to learn compared to learners whose home language was English. It suggests that learners who were First English Language Speakers were benefiting more in terms of learning as they communicated and received teaching in their home language. Layton (2012) argues that cultural emergent properties (CEP) distribute cultural resources and symbolic power such as beliefs and languages unequally. In this study,

this indicates that the culture of the school in terms of LOLT constrained the provision of equal opportunities to learn (who came from racially diverse backgrounds). However, since the learners came from different ethnicities, it will be difficult to enable them to learn using their own languages. Therefore, English could therefore be considered a compromise language that could be accessible at varying degrees to all learners. However, this does not necessarily equate to the provision of equal opportunities to learn.

In terms of the relations between learners, regardless of race, culture or ethnicity, the interview responses from *Ms Petersen* revealed that there was some unwillingness by local learners (South African learners) to relate well with the international learners (from other African countries and overseas). *Ms Petersen* stated that foreign learners on the other hand interacted very well with one another than with the local learners. According to *Ms Petersen*, this was more of an ethnic issue than an interracial issue as stated in the following quote:

*“Religious, no, definitely not, are you talking about incidents where one race is against the other race?... No, no, no, definitely not. And also, because we are predominantly black students, even in that the different cultures do not clash, what we do have which I do notice is a little bit of an issue, is that we have got a lot of foreign students as well, so that becomes a little bit of a challenge, there is a little bit of hesitation from our South African students to embrace them, it takes a while for them to settle as well and then when they do settle, the foreigners tend to stick with each other for a little while, so that we do notice, like in one of my classes, I have got one French, one French girl and then there is, one is from Nigeria but they stick together because the others, they are friends with them but we don’t see them like a full interaction with them, so I don’t know whether that’s like a cultural issue or whether the kids just don’t have anything to relate to them, or whatever, so it is not interracial issues but more cultural issues”* (Ms Petersen, pers. comm, 16 April 2014).

On the other hand, *Ms Osteen* indicated that there had never been racial or cultural incidents that happened at the school that she was aware of. She explained it as follows:

*“No, no, no, there has never been a cultural or racial issue that has happened at school that I am aware of. This kind of behaviour is a major offence. I never had to deal with this issue in 8 years”* (Ms Osteen, pers. comm, 27 May 2014).

From the above citations, I have established that learners who came from diverse indigenous backgrounds did not relate well with each other because of language and cultural differences.

It is clear from the citation from *Ms Petersen* above that she was aware that diverse cultural backgrounds had negative implications on learners' relations, but there was nothing that was being done to ensure that learners do relate well with one another regardless of their cultural differences. Further, the cultural differences were to an extent also hindering interaction and limiting epistemological access. Learner agency was negatively impacted by the limited interaction between learners from different cultural backgrounds. In particular, foreign learners suffered because it took longer for them to 'settle' into the new learning environment, limiting their opportunities to learn in the initial phase. This had negative implications in terms of the provision of equal opportunities to learn as all learners were taught in the language that was not their indigenous home language and by teachers who did not share similar cultural backgrounds with them.

The study also found that bullying did not happen at school. This was a result of school's efforts to curb bullying such as awareness campaigns, where external people came to the school to address learners about the issue of bullying and its consequences to the victims and perpetrators. This gave an indication that the school did not encourage bullying, and it has inculcated a culture of tolerance that was amenable to opening opportunities for all learners to learn. The school culture promoted good relations amongst learners and this created opportunities for an impactful learning environment for all learners.

### **6.3 Cultural dimensions of learning**

Teachers who took part in the study indicated during face-to-face interviews that the methods of teaching and learning that they utilise included group work, learner-centred methods where learners were actively involved throughout the lessons, learning by doing or through investigation. Generally, teachers believed that the instructional methods they used were effective in helping learners from diverse racial backgrounds to understand the content of the lessons. Classroom observations that I conducted revealed that the instructional methods used were based on both learner-centred and teacher-centred approaches, while textbook and other materials such as video clips were used to deliver the lessons. The

assessment methods applied relied mainly on the question and answer approach. According to my observation, the instructional methods used, particularly, the teacher-centred and the question and answer approaches, had negative implications on the provision of equal opportunities to learn as not all learners participated in answering the questions raised by the teachers and some of the learners seemed not to be paying attention to what was taught. This was compounded by the fact that there were no remedial actions aimed at facilitating learning for those who had limited participation during lessons. The fact that questions were only raised by teachers may show that the culture of learning was mainly top-down and authoritarian. This practice had an effect of putting learners at a distance as they were mainly considered recipients of knowledge. In enhancing opportunities to learn and epistemological access, learning must also enable generation of knowledge by learners. Learners must be seen as contributors to knowledge by being enabled to actively participate in the learning process.

The interview responses from *Ms Osteen* regarding teaching and learning resources, revealed that she used various resources such as audio or videos, textbooks as well as chalkboard, depending on the content of the lesson. *Ms Petersen* stated that since the visualisation (pictures and videos) was colourful, and there was music (audio), these were exciting and attractive to learners, and they enjoyed them more than reading and writing. *Ms Petersen* indicated that the negative side was when learners got so fascinated by the songs, the dances, the music and they end up not focusing on the concept and connecting it with the content of the lesson. Further, she stated that, due to the new curriculum (CAPS), it took a lot of time for teachers to gather information in preparation for the lessons and marking learners' work. It also took a lot of time for learners to research information and put it together for their projects. This had positive implications on the provision of equal opportunities to learn as taking a lot of time preparing for lessons and projects provided both teachers and learners with an opportunity to gain more knowledge about the subject matter. However, the negative implication is that, if more time is spent gathering information, this reduces time for making it applicable to the learning environment. Also, information gathering for learners from former disadvantaged backgrounds may be complicated by lack of access to technologies such as computers and internet access at home. *Ms Osteen* and *Ms Petersen* explained it in this way:

*“Internet is available at school and in the classrooms. The school has various wonderful teaching and learning resources such as laptops, tablets, monitors, we do have a media centre which is used by both teachers and learners to search information. We also use textbooks and every learner has a textbook in all Learning Areas. The school time-table is done according to policy. My English lessons are assigned 30 minutes, they are nine periods per class and per week. My Social Science are also 30 minutes, six periods per class and per week (Ms Osteen, pers. Comm., 27 May 2014)”.*

*“Look the advantages are many in that you have got your learners that enjoy your visuals, they do not enjoy reading and writing, they enjoy visualizing such as pictures and videos. The interesting thing is that they are colourful, it is exciting. We also use audios like music, you know, there are all the things they enjoy. And the negative side is that, what happens is that they get so captivated by the songs, the dances, the music and all the things that they actually forget the concept, they do not focus on the concept that much. And then also the preparation for that takes a lot of time to do the presentations, have the video clips. Something I should have mentioned to you earlier on is that all our lessons are half hour lessons, so it is only 30 minutes. So, for English when I have a double period, I have got an hour, so that means going and getting the video clips done, explaining the concept, doing examples in class and actually getting learners to do the classwork, so it is a lot to get done if you are going that kind of medium. The preparations are a lot for them to do as well, because you have to research what you are doing, find the video clips, present to them, get the presentation done, is a lot, that’s the disadvantage on my side. Like I said the disadvantage on their side is that some of them get so involved with watching all the nice things and they don’t connect the concept to that and that can be a bit of a problem” (Ms Petersen, Pers. comm., 16 April 2014).*

What emerged from the above citation from *Ms Petersen* was that the use of visuals such as pictures and audio visuals during teaching and learning had negative implications on the provision of equal opportunities to learn as learners ended up not concentrating on what was being taught but, on the music, and images that were symbolised. Teaching and learning time constrained the provision of equal opportunities to learn because it seemed not enough for effective teaching and learning to take place. For instance, time appeared not to be sufficient for showing video clips, explaining the concepts, providing examples and letting learners to do the class activities. This points to the fact that the new curriculum (CAPS) anticipates teachers and learners to do a lot of class activities within a very limited time and this constrains the provision of equal opportunities to learn (See tables 3 and 4 below for the duration of learning periods).

**Table 3: Grade 6 time-table focusing on English and Social Science lessons (Ms Petersen – 2014)**

	7:30	7:40	8:10	8:40		9:10	9:40	10:00	10:30	11:00	11:30	12:00	12:15	12:45	13:15
	Period 1	Period 2	Period 3	Period 4		Period 5	1 <sup>st</sup> Break	Period 6	Period 7	Period 8	Period 9	2 <sup>nd</sup> Break	Period 10	Period 11	Period 12
Monday	Assembly				English 6M				English 6P	Computer / free period			English 6A		SS 6M
Tuesday	Register				English 6A			English 6M			English 6M		English 6A	Computer /free period	SS 6M
Wednesday	Register				English 6M			English 6M	SS 6M				English 6A		
Thursday	Register					Computer		English 6A		English 6M				SS 6M	Computer / free period
Friday	Register							English 6A		SS 6M				English 6M	Comp English 6A

**Table 4: Grade 7 time-table focusing on English and Social Science lessons (Ms Osteen – 2014)**

	7:30	7:40	8:10	8:40	9:10	9:40	10:00	10:30	11:00	11:30	12:00	12:15	12:45	13:15
	Period 1	Period 2	Period 3	Period 4	Period 5	1 <sup>st</sup> Break	Period 6	Period 7	Period 8	Period 9	2 <sup>nd</sup> Break	Period 10	Period 11	Period 12
Monday	Assembly	Assembly Gr7 H	English Gr7 H	English Gr7 C			SS Gr7 H	SS Gr7 C		English Gr7 B		English Gr7 C		SS Gr7 B
Tuesday	Register	English Gr7 H		English Gr7 B				SS Gr7 H	English Gr7 C			SS Gr7 B		SS Gr7 B
Wednesday	register	English Gr7 H		English Gr7 B						SS Gr7 B		SS Gr7 H	English Gr7 C	SS Gr7 C
Thursday	Register	English Gr7 H		SS Gr7 H			English Gr7 B		English Gr7 C			SS Gr7 B	SS Gr7 C	
Friday	Register	English Gr7 H		English Gr7 C					SS Gr7 H			SS Gr7 B		English Gr7 B

Tables 3 and 4 above demonstrate that time as a resource for teaching and learning was not equally allocated to all the Learning Areas. Some of the English and Computer Learning Areas were allocated 30 minutes while others like Social Sciences were assigned 60 minutes. Learners were deprived of the opportunity to grasp the content of the lessons within the 30 minutes periods allocated to some of the Learning Areas. This also limited teachers of the opportunities to demonstrate the subject matters adequately. Equality of opportunity to learn necessitates an increased amount of teaching and learning time in order to assist the least equipped learners to master the curriculum (Carroll, 1963). Opportunities to learn and learners' academic performance are improved in the classes where teachers carry on with the lesson for an adequate time (Zimmerman & Carlos, 1999; Berliner, 1990). I gathered from my study that the school used remedial classes (after school lessons), which ran from 13:30 to 15:00 every day, to help less prepared learners to better understand the content of the lesson. Overall, teachers who participated in the study regarded the remedial classes as important aids in improving learners' academic performance. As mentioned by the principal, *Mr Norman*:

*The main aim of these classes is to support learners who might not have grasped the content knowledge during the normal school hours. The aim is to help them if they did not understand this morning's lesson, about fractions, or verbs or nouns or this; you come to the remedial classes in the afternoon. And now the teacher can spend so much more with every child and when that child goes home, he or she will understand today's work (Mr Norman, pers. comm., 26 June 2014).*

The interview responses from *Ms Osteen* further indicated that her methods of teaching mostly involved the learner-centred method where learners were actively involved in activities throughout the lessons. *Ms Osteen* said that the use of a learner-centred approach helped learners to remain attentive to what was taught, and they interacted with the teacher in terms of asking questions. According to *Ms Osteen*, in preparing for lessons, she used information from various textbooks that she got from the media centre as well as information from the internet. During the classroom observations of her English and Social Sciences lessons, I found that she relied mainly on the question and answer method and she used textbooks, handouts and video clips as some of the material resources. My observation during classroom teaching and learning of the Social Science lesson was that she used video clips to



demonstrate the content of the lesson and she spent time explaining to learners the history of slavery and what happened to slaves during that time. She appeared to be resourceful in terms of imparting knowledge to learners on slavery. The content of the lessons covered only Black African people and European people (White), thereby somehow excluding learners of Indian and coloured descent. However, Indians were brought to South Africa to work as slaves and coloureds in some cases are children of whites and slaves who might have been black or Indian. Therefore, Indians were also affected by slavery in South Africa. Although, the lesson was not explicit on this issue, somehow it was related to all the learners in some way showing the complexity of slavery as a subject matter.

In her explanation of her teaching strategies in racially diverse classrooms, *Ms Petersen* gave an example of the lesson on the “*fairy tale*” and stated that the lesson would be presented the same way to all learners. However, she indicated that, because the lesson was about a story of a particular culture, learners from other cultures might not have a similar understanding of the concepts compared to those learners whose traditions and culture are similar to that depicted in the story. In other words, the lesson benefitted learners whose culture and traditions were represented during the lesson. She puts it in this way:

*“Mmmmm, that one, you know the content is so varied in English, so if you are looking at say for example “fairy tale” if I am using content for “fairy tale” and then like those concepts do not change like whatever the content pertaining to “fairy tale” is still there regardless of whatever your race is going to be there. But then again, we have different folktales like what may be a folktale for one culture may not be understood by another culture and they may find it a bit funny and they think “oh but that is ridiculous”. We have that in class where we have done Xhosa folktale which is different from Chinese folktale and the children cannot relate to the Chinese stuff because it is not something that they understand, so these teaching methods that are used especially with visuals helps them see because you can identify a person from China because you can see it and you can understand what that story is about because you can see it rather than just telling a story to someone, they can’t visualize it. So, what we did notice was a little of a thing, but the tool, that strategy was to show them the video clips and that helped them understand different cultures” (Ms Petersen, pers. Comm., 16 April 2014).*

The excerpt above shows that, although learners might understand the content of the lesson, those whose lesson is about their culture benefitted more than others. This shows that, even though teachers can make efforts to demonstrate the lessons using graphics and diagrams,

opportunities to learn to learners will remain unequal depending on the subject matter. This indicated that the contents of some of the lessons impedes the provision of equal opportunities to learn as not all learners' cultures or tradition or race will be symbolised. This situation is not necessarily unique. Inherently, the teacher's cultural background (English speaking) had a potential to impact on opportunities to learn. As a result, learners from the language cultural background similar to the teacher benefited more than others in terms of knowledge and understanding.

## **6.4 Teachers as content experts versus learners as the receivers of information**

### **6.4.1 Grade 7 classroom lessons**

The findings from the observed classes revealed that organisation of the classrooms in terms of representations on the walls did not symbolise all racial groups. The walls in one of the classrooms that I have observed had two pictures that represent two racial groups (Asian and Black). The other visual displays were of the school's Code of Conduct, the South African Court of Arms, the class timetable, pictures of animals, the map of Africa, and Grade 7 English Language themes. In another classroom, decorations on the walls were of the learners' birth dates and guidelines for preparing tests. This implied that, although the school was racially diverse, there was no adequate representation of racial diversity in the form of decorations on the walls of the classrooms. This therefore suggests that only Indian and Black learners could see their races represented on the classroom walls. This therefore suggests that the school did not represent the full racial diversity in terms of classroom beautifications and therefore opportunities to learn through them may not be equal for all learners. These findings are similar to the findings by Vandeyar (2010) who also conducted case studies of eighteen educators working in racially diverse South African classrooms. She found that most of the classrooms she had observed were either decorated with learners' work on a specific theme or posters that were reminder of the former apartheid schooling period, depending on the racial group the school was formerly serving.

#### **6.4.1.1 Lesson Observation 1 – Grade 7 Social Science lesson**

The observed class comprised 24 learners taught by *Ms Osteen*. Twenty-one of the learners were black Africans, one was White, one was Coloured, and one was Asian, and the teacher was a white Afrikaans speaking person. Learners were seated in pairs; some were a girl and boy seated next to each other while others were two boys, or two girls seated next to each other.

The lesson started with the whole class watching a couple of video clips on slavery. *Ms Osteen's* first lesson was mainly based on the video clips about the slavery, with more explanations from her side and less time for questions and answer. Before she showed learners the video clips, she started by explaining what was contained in the video clips regarding slavery. She elucidated that slavery continued for almost 300 years because of the industrial revolution in Europe when machines started replacing human beings in factories and more raw materials were required for industry. She further gave details that, since Europe has a small portion of farming land, colonisers had to relocate to America to do some farming of high demand products such as sugar cane. The excerpt below illustrates how *Ms Osteen* explained the content of the videos about slavery:

*"I am showing you a couple of video clips, these are just small little fragments from either slide shows and photographs as you know during that time there were not many photographs available because we are talking from year 1600 onwards as you know slavery went on for almost 300 years and it was due to the industrial revolution in Europe when machines started replacing human beings in factories and the factories could no longer keep up with the production of goods so they needed raw materials as you know Europe is tiny and they don't have a lot of farming land. Settlers from Europe went to America to do mainly four types of farming and it was cotton farming, rice farming, tobacco farming and sugar cane farming and of course they needed a lot of labourers to do all of the hard work on these massive big farms. Before this as you can see the date there 1619, slavery had existed for years we even read about it in the bible when we read of the history of Egypt and the pyramids and when the Israelites were captured, and they were used as slaves in Egypt to build the pyramids etcetera. So, slavery has been going on for long, but it became a very profitable business once manufacturing of goods started and people needed these raw materials, and this is when it became almost costly, not almost but beyond costly it's unimaginable. I'll answer your questions just now, I want to show you the video clips now, as you know I wanted you to write a diary entry as a slave as your first night on your owners farm so you can give a recount shortly of where you were taken, what happened, very shortly I don't want something longer than a page and a half, it must not be too long just shortly you were taken from there, the journey on*

*the ship, the auction, the market and everything it will make more sense to you once I give you more of the information and I am sure you will get a better understanding once you see some of these video clips, now the first one is just a range of pictures that have been put together with some sound effects” (Ms Osteen, Classroom Observation: 27 May 2014).*

Data reveals that the above lesson, to an extent, did not provide all learners with equal opportunities to learn because the exercise given wanted learners to picture themselves mainly as slaves (victims) and this could have been a challenge for learners of European descent who could easily associate with the slave owners who were White in this case. Further, the lesson focused on the victims of the slave trade and shed limited information on the perpetrators of slavery. This approach somehow eliminates the perpetrator from the picture and leaving learners a limited room to scrutinise their behaviour. The inability to look at both sides of the slavery issue limits epistemological access of full exploration of human rights issues related to slavery. It is a challenge for teachers to integrate subject content and students’ languages and cultures in ways that are meaningful and relevant for their students. Teachers find it difficult to recognize or tend to ignore the knowledge and experiences that the students bring to the learning process. Lee (2001) and Odora Hoppers (2001) argue that methods of teaching various components of the subjects are mechanically presented to children without any attempts to connect it with that crucial ‘prior’ knowledge.

I observed a Grade 7 Social Science lesson and it focused on European people doing farming in America using slave labour. The main objective of the lesson was for learners to learn about the history of slaves in America. This video lesson failed to link the slave trade to Africa or South Africa. This could create an impression to learners that slavery was a distant matter that had limited local relevance. Lessons on sensitive issues such as slavery are critical in making learners develop insights and also understanding how modern forms of slavery could be identified and eliminated. This is critical because slavery is an evolving concept. The fact that it has been abolished does not mean that people have stopped practicing it in some subtle and varying forms of abuse and paying workers with things such as food and liquor. Slavery is about the culture of control, brutality and economic subjugation practiced by colonialists.

Similarly, the second video clip that learners watched was also about African people being slaves. The video clip showed African traders smuggling their own people and selling them to Europeans. This video depicts the complexity of slavery. The lesson above mainly focuses on the perpetrators (slave masters) and victims (slaves). In this context, the video shows us that in some instances Africans themselves sold their own kith and kin to advance their own personal interests such as making income. After watching the video clip, *Ms Osteen* explained everything that learners have seen in the video. The passage below gives details of what *Ms Osteen* said:

*“Abducted from his village, and these were traders, African traders that stole them from their villages to sell them to European traders because they made a lot of money out of it. You can imagine innocently going about your day to day business and you just get grabbed you don’t know what is going on. They marched for kilometres far to the barracoons which were on the west coast and there they were kept until the slave ships came and sometimes the slave ships that came with cargos they came to exchange for slaves, they had materials, iron and weapons and alcohol and things like that. It took them 6 months to unload all of that, all the cargos. And they had to sit in those barracoons for 6 months and then go to the sea for four months. By then slavery was abolished and against the law but it still carried on illegally because it was still profitable and there was still a demand for slaves so they carried on illegally, now there is a ship in the background, you can imagine that one is a very big ship we spoke about the other day, that up to 600 slaves would be kept on a ship like that, can you imagine space wise” (Ms Osteen, Classroom Observation: 27 May 2014).*

As noted, the above passage of the lesson showed how local Africans collaborated with slave traders to sell their own. The video clip depicted Africans as slaves and those who collaborated in selling their own are shown as greedy: ‘they made a lot of money out of it’. Somehow, the video shows the reality of White superiority in the apartheid era, which still continues in the economic space in South Africa. This showed the colonial injustice of the time and why it needs to be rectified. As indicated above, the second video clip also failed to tell us more about the slave masters. Somehow it conceals the evilness of their system and their motives behind it. This inability to confront the evilness of the colonialist has somehow enabled elements of slavery to continue in various forms and shapes, making the concept of slavery difficult to do away with.

All learners paid more attention to what they were watching on the video clips. Some of them even showed sympathy to the slaves in the video clips through their facial expression and they uttered words like “aaaaaaaaa” as an indication that they were sympathetic to the slaves. I established that the story reminded the learners of the apartheid government where inequality with regard to race, culture, and socio-economic status existed. The colonial effects of apartheid will continue to linger for many more years. The lesson represented the reality as it was then and should correctly be linked to the apartheid era. Its intention was to reveal the racial injustices of that era to the learners. The limitations of the two videos was that they do not shed light on how the consequences of slavery continue to be felt until today because of the displacement of people and the fact that most of the victims have lost their dignity, culture and resources. These remain challenges that need attention. Further, it would have been important to also show that, although slavery was done away with, other forms of exploitation replacing slavery have come to the fore. This includes the exploitation of resources in African countries through multinationals from developed countries that were former beneficiaries of slavery. It is also important to note that slavery contributed into laying the economic foundations in developed countries such as America, Spain and England because slave masters reinvested the proceeds of the slave trade into these countries. To an extent, this also gives a picture of the contribution of slavery into their current economic dominance. The inability of the two lessons to show both sides of the slave trade have denied the learners an opportunity to develop a balanced view of this phenomenon. Further, the failure to interrogate the role of White slave masters and the focus only on Africans as victims somehow contributes to the cultural imperialism discourse by depicting the slave masters in better light through omission. This further imparts the learners with the belief that Whites are superior, whilst Africans deserve sympathy which in no way could redress the injustices of slavery. This discourse perpetuates a culture of imperialism and dominance.

#### **6.4.1.2 Lesson Observation 2 – Grade 7 English lesson**

Secondly, I observed a Grade 7 English lesson presented by *Ms Osteen*. The lesson observed consisted of 28 learners, that is, 13 boys and 15 girls. Twenty-seven learners were Black Africans and one was a White learner. Learners were seated in pairs; some were a girl and

boy seated next to each other while others were two boys, or two girls seated next to each other. *Ms Osteen* began a lesson by giving learners an activity on page 136 of their English textbook. The title of the book is “*English Home Language, Solutions for all*” and it was published by MacMillan (Leggat & Kerr, 2013). The activity was for learners to read the extract information and answer the questions thereafter. The method of teaching used by *Ms Osteen* in this lesson was question and answer, where the textbook was used as the main source of teaching and learning. *Ms Osteen* instructed the learners to take note of the unfamiliar words and encouraged learners to ask questions where they did not understand. However, before learners could start reading, *Ms Osteen* began to ask learners questions based on the abstract. This is how she illustrated it:

***Ms Osteen:*** *I want you to go from the top of the page I think from page 136 down at the middle, until one of you has an idea, pick up some words and we will discuss them in 90 seconds. Right tell me what your ideas and thoughts are, what can we expect, what do you think this is about?*

***Lindiwe:*** *Ma’am we can expect food.*

***Ms Osteen:*** *We can expect food? How is food relevant here? What are they doing?*

***Quinton:*** *They are cooking mam.*

***Ms Osteen:*** *Cooking or having dinner?*

***Ana:*** *Having dinner.*

***Ms Osteen:*** *Yes, they are having dinner, I think the food is already made, how do we know all these things? Please mention all these kinds of dishes, who are having dinner?*

***Fhumu:*** *The family.*

***Ms Osteen:*** *A family right, we have gathered and there is mom, dad and children, we don’t know how many exactly yet unless if you are speed reader and a genius then you might be able to tell me how many children in 90 seconds.*

***Kagiso:*** *Ma’am there is someone that is leaving.*

***Ms Osteen:*** *There is someone that is leaving yes, but what do you feel about the mood of this, is it a happy jolly vacation, is there a bit of a tension, are people afraid? What words did you pick up tell me?*

***Lebogang:*** *Mam, I think the girl or the daughter is afraid that something might happen to the person that is leaving.*

***Ms Osteen:*** *Yes, correct there are many ways that tell us that there is some form of worry, some form of concern that there is danger on the.....that there is something going on and then for some of you who put up that there are lot of terms that referred to war, going*

*away.....fighting against someone all of those things create an atmosphere of being quite scared and nervous about something” (Ms Osteen, Classroom Observation, 27 May 2014).*

The extract above was based on discussions around a story entitled *“Yesterday’s history, tomorrow’s mystery”*, where a man was preparing to leave his family because there were British troops looking for gold that were coming to attack the South African boers<sup>11</sup>. This happened prior to 1994 where South Africa was colonised by the British and the Afrikaner people were fighting against the British people.

As I have already indicated, *Ms Osteen* was a White Afrikaans speaking person and the story was about an Afrikaner family and the British people fighting for the country’s resources. From the above passage, I could feel that *Ms Osteen* could not detach herself from the family that was illustrated in the story as she saw her culture represented. It is also important to note that this behaviour is not only attributed to Afrikaners, although it may not be prominent in African culture. The teacher’s association with the culture was observed when she said: *“A family right, we have gathered here on the table and there is mom, dad and children”*. The word *“we”* in the sentence showed that *Ms Osteen* somehow got influenced by her own cultural background in the classroom regardless of the racial and cultural backgrounds of the learners she teaches. To an extent, I can say that her cultural emergent power had the potential to constrain the provision of equal opportunities to learn.

The lesson focused on White people and a Black African. The Black African depicted in the picture seemed to be a Black African woman who appeared to be a helper of the Afrikaner family. This was the reality of White domination over blacks in the apartheid regime and it symbolised the injustices related to economic marginalisation of Black Africans that continues until today, although there are currently various initiatives being implemented to address the situation. To some extent, this lesson symbolised the racial and class discrimination that was present in the apartheid era, where the helper did not sit to eat with her masters and her role

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<sup>11</sup>Boer is a white person in South Africa who is related to the Dutch people who went to live there in the 17<sup>th</sup> century.



was to serve them. Further, although not depicted here, in most instances the helper will be serving better food to her employers than what she would eat. The lesson provided learners with an opportunity to discuss issues of racial inequality during the apartheid era and its relevance to life today. Since some of the learners came from middle class families who also employed helpers, they could also be able to gauge whether practices of the past continue or not in their homes despite issues of race. However, this story did not resonate with learners who came from poor families with no helpers and somehow limited their opportunities to learn. Further, the focus on Whites as the ones being served further deepened the narrative that Blacks were viewed as inferior. These beliefs and values are likely to perpetuate inequality and racial tensions as a result of contestations for the economic space.

The question and answer method was the main approach that was utilised to assess learners' understanding of the subject matter. After reading the story, *Ms Osteen* asked learners some questions based on the story she had read and learners responded. This was how the question and answer method went:

***Ms Osteen:*** Right, words that you don't understand, pick up your words ok I have a question for you why do you think that in their country they have mealie meal, dry fruit and biltong what does that tell you?

***Marie:*** I think they have a farm.

***Ms Osteen:*** Right they do have a farm, the farm is mentioned but what does that tell you about where they are technologically? Think about it.

***Jan:*** They are in a war.

***Ms Osteen:*** Yes, we have established.

***Palesa:*** Maybe in a safe house or something?

***Ms Osteen:*** No safe farm house, look at the foods list here.

***Joyce:*** Mam I think....

***Ms Osteen:*** Yes, they are; you noticed that everything is dry, what does that tell you?

***Thami:*** They have been saving it for later.

***Ms Osteen:*** Yes, why do they save it that way? Why do they preserve it that way? Because they do not have....?

***Nina:*** Fridge.

**Ms Osteen:** *Fridges! You struggle with going back in history, remember we are talking many years ago before people had the luxury of fridges and electricity and all of those things they preserve their food by stocking it, by drying it their mealie meal, dry meat, dry fruit all of those things they preserve them in that way because they didn't have fridges to keep things fresh. You can hear that the names are very Afrikaans which tells you that these people are from an Afrikaans family so the fathers are obviously fighting for the Boers against the British. But all people think that they are after our riches, the South African country's riches, our gold, they only want our gold is this true?*

**Thabang:** Yes.

**Ms Osteen:** *Yes, it is true of course, it is true, and that is why they took certain countries in Africa in the first place to take all of the natural resources for themselves (Ms Osteen, Classroom Observation, 27 May 2014).*

The question and answer method of assessment was not helpful in terms of assessing whether all learners understood the subject matter. The teacher only focused on those learners who raised their hand up to respond to the questions while those who were not actively participating in the activity were never provided with an opportunity to talk. This suggests that the method used to assess learners could obstruct the provision of equal opportunities for all to participate in the lesson and thus their opportunities to learn were not equal. Further, the teacher's guidance only helped to defend Afrikaners whilst casting a negative light on the British. This view negates the fact that Afrikaners in some ways also victimised indigenous people for access to similar resources. The story in some way also does not place Black Africans anywhere in the picture on this scramble for resources. Somehow, this omission may create an impression that Black Africans do not bother about these economic resources. Although these lessons may provide some lessons, there is a probability of perpetuating inequality. Even though it may not have been a conscious choice, these lessons did not really provide any uplifting messages for Black Africans in particular. Somehow, African learners were reduced into spectators of other people's lives. This has the potential to create a negative impression for African learners making their opportunities to learn to diminish.

Learners were also given an opportunity to ask questions. The majority of their questions were clarity seeking questions. The questions were as follows:

**Tumi:** *Ma'am who are the outlanders on the reef?*

**Ms Osteen:** *Outlanders on the reef is the "uitlanders" people that lived out there that is an Afrikaans word, for that these days when we talk about outlanders we talk about people from overseas, yes?*

**Judas:** *Ma'am we have also got black people fight during the war.*

**Ms Osteen:** *Yes, some people died, actually they were quite a few people that took part in the war, quite a few black people that took part in the war, yes*

**John:** *Mam what is a Bantam cock?*

**Ms Osteen:** *A Bantam cock it's a small chicken, you know those cheeky small chickens?*

**Learners:** *Yes.*

**Ms Osteen:** *They always walk around with their partners?*

*(Learners laughing)*

**Ms Osteen:** *And they are scared of nothing they are not those big ones that look intimidating, you are scared of those little ones that are cheeky, that they come and poke you or do this to you or whatever you will get a fright?*

**Sheila:** *Yes.*

**Ms Osteen:** *It is the cheeky male chicken.*

*(Learners laughing) (Ms, Osteen, Classroom Observation, 27 May 2014).*

Code switching was used to clarify certain words that learners did not understand. Since Ms Osteen's first language was Afrikaans, she first used her home language to explain the word "Outlander" as indicated in the story. In her response to the questions about "who are the outlanders", she started by translating the word "outlander" in Afrikaans which means "uitlander". This suggests that the lesson had a bias towards the Afrikaans language and culture as the translation was first done in Afrikaans before the explanation of the English (outlander) could be provided. The use of Afrikaans words in the lesson, can be viewed as further entrenching the dominance of Afrikaners. There is an injustice in Black Africans being taught lessons that focus on dominant groups such as Afrikaners and showing their lives positively, whilst the same is not done for Black Africans. Considering the past injustices, there is a need to have lessons/stories that also positively affirm Black, Asian and Coloured culture, beliefs and values. This in turn will provide White students an opportunity to learn about other cultures.

Notably, the names of the people in the story were also Afrikaans names such as “*Hannie*”, “*Lena*”, “*Milner*”, and “*Barend*”. The children in the story called their father, “*Pa*” which is an Afrikaans word meaning “*father*”. Some of the names of the places in the story were also called in Afrikaans, such as “*Volksraad*” and “*Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek*”. This lesson was actually a missed opportunity for the teacher and learner to interrogate the racial bias of the story and to discuss issues of racial prejudice and rights. The story is not necessarily wrong but how it is used as teaching aid that is an issue. The literature reviewed in Chapter 1 indicated that the teaching of multiracial learners should include the integration of their indigenous knowledge into the lessons so that their epistemological access is improved. Educational resources curricula must speak to the learners’ real, experienced world (Pityana, 2009; Jay, 2003). This therefore suggests that there is need to explain these names in the language that learners can understand so that their knowledge is increased.

#### **6.4.1.3 Lesson Observation 3 – Grade 7 Social Science**

The third lesson that I observed was a Social Science lesson presented by *Ms Osteen*. The lesson observed consisted of 24 learners, that is, 13 girls and 11 boys. Of the 24 learners, one was an Asian learner, the rest were Black African learners. Learners were seated in pairs; some were a girl and boy seated next to each other while others were two boys, or two girls seated next to each other. During this lesson, *Ms Osteen* was doing revision with learners in preparation for the Social Science examination. *Ms Osteen* gave learners the scope of the exam where she encouraged learners to study natural disasters such as volcanoes, floods, earthquakes, drainage system, lava, and vegetation. Consider the following passage from the classroom observation:

*“For your Social Sciences, the exam that is coming you must focus on natural disasters. We look at volcanoes, we look at earthquakes and we look at floods. Now there are several things that we looked at that are pretty much the same when it comes to these things such as what precautions or what measures can you take to address the impacts these horrible disasters. If you think of earthquakes, for example, you have to write that in full on what can be done to make sure that the damage is not that enormous or drastic. Things such as strengthening the building, things such as having a communication system and a warning system that is very effective, training enough people to deal with survivors that might have been hurt, etcetera.”*

*On floods, there was a list of nine things that you could look at to make sure that they do not do much damage. The first one was obviously not to stay on top of the river or to stay further away or implementing the laws to forbid people from being so close to the river banks. Having walls next to the dam or the river banks, built them right up so that the water does not rise. The water does not overflow that quickly building walls across the river like that with little channels to slow down the speed of the rivers flow, that if it rains down and there are lots of water, it actually slows the water down as it comes down it won't rush down and overflow its banks.*

*We also talked about the drainage systems. Remember, let us not block drains and underground pipes that take away massive amount of water it doesn't dam up and become a problem all these underground water pipes that have to take water from certain areas that's why we call it drainage system. Vegetation, planting vegetation so that slows down water on mountain slopes having those steps put in that the water can spread out when it runs down, there are quite a few of those. I want you to form earthquakes to look at it for few minutes...when we talk about the earth plates moving, what effects it has and what type of carbon with volcanos and earthquakes it is all got to do with plate movements, if plate moves apart, it opens up a gap, lava comes out. Lava becomes crust because it is a melted rock and it cools down and it hardens so it is either it is under the sea or it is on the surface and that's how islands also starts, it starts on the ocean floor and where the earth plates opens up and lava comes out and then it goes up and it opens up on the same weak spot again until it becomes higher and higher and then we have the island forming above the water, while formed like that you will find many Volcanos on that area" (Ms Osteen, Classroom Observation, 28 May 2014).*

From the above passage, it appeared that *Ms Osteen* was well-informed about the subject matter. She seemed to be knowledgeable in terms of imparting knowledge to the learners. She was a qualified teacher for Social Science and she was intellectually resourceful in the sense that she possessed the understanding and information around the Social Science subject. The lesson provides all learners with access to knowledge and understanding of the topics around volcanoes, floods, earthquakes, drainage system, and so on. This suggests that the knowledge that the teacher possess about the subject matter enables her to provide equal opportunities to learn.

During this revision time, the question and answer method was used to check if learners still remembered the work that was done in the second term of the year. This confirmed the fact that the teacher relied heavily on this approach. Its negative effect is that it may over emphasise the significance of the teacher in the learning process. This approach may stifle the development of the ability of the learners to view themselves as part of the development

of knowledge. In learning, it is important to create space for enabling and acknowledging of learner agency. For learners to achieve epistemological access they must actively engage in learning and they must not only be seen as consumers. Therefore, there is a need to find other methodologies to complement the 'question and answer approach' to enable active learner participation and enhancing opportunities to learn.

During the lesson, Ms Osteen asked learners some questions and learners responded. This is how it went:

**Ms Osteen:** *Like I said for slavery, we are going to look at the basic things that we did so far, where did slaves come from?*

**John:** *West Africa.*

**Ms Osteen:** *And they did, they all just lived on the beach and have braai's there?*

**Donald:** *No.*

**Ms Osteen:** *Where did they live?*

**Ronny:** *Inland.*

**Ms Osteen:** *How did they get from there to there?*

**Tom:** *They were kidnapped.*

**Ms Osteen:** *They were abducted or kidnapped that's right, they were held hostage or whatever, and then did they go to the beach and have a party?*

**Ruth:** *No.*

**Ms Osteen:** *No, what happened?*

**Nonhlanhla:** *They were kept as prisoners.*

**Ms Osteen:** *They were kept as prisoners in what, what do they call that place what Barracoons, which is a prison yes, they were locked in there and then they had to wait for?*

**Esther:** *Ships.*

**Ms Osteen:** *No, they talk about the trade triangles, Africa, Europe and America. From Europe they needed a lot of raw materials that is why the settlers went to America to start farms, what are the main four farming things?*

**Ruby:** *Cotton, rice, tobacco and sugar" (Ms Osteen, Classroom Observation, 28 May 2014).*

From the above quotation, it shows that the teacher had content knowledge about the topic. What learners did in response to her question was to provide short answers, but the teacher would explain in detail for learners to understand the subject matter. The teacher prepared learners to perform better during the exam as she specified how the exam would look like and further indicated that she would not ask questions about the work that was not done during the second term. Learners were expected to substantiate their answers or arguments. The teacher's knowledge about the subject matter had positive implications on the provision of equal opportunities to learn as she also provided learners with information on the scope of the examinations. She put it in this way:

*"So that is basically what I am going to ask about the rest of the test and then these circumstances, these situations I have shown you a lot of things that you can take in from here. If you understand these it is easy when you put yourself in that position and when you have got a bit of help to see these things and so on and almost experiencing yourself just remember all of those things, those are basically the things that will be asked about slavery, I am not going to other details about the work that we might not have covered by the time we get to the exam. But, we will do a bit of revision again before that, then for tomorrow please don't be late, we only have that double period, okay. It is a test out of 35, it does not sound like it is a lot of marks but it is a lot of writing because you will need to answer and prove your answers and why you say so, so it is a lot of writing and thinking involved and that takes time so don't be late with that" (Ms Osteen, Classroom Observation, 28 May 2014).*

Ms Osteen also explained to the learners the second activity that they were expected to do as a form of assessment. She explained that learners were supposed to provide references and pictures of things people had experienced during the time of slavery. She encouraged learners to provide summaries of what life looked like during that period. After explaining how the test would look like, learners were given an opportunity to ask questions. This went as follows:

**Ms Osteen:** *Teacher: right you can either continue with this or you can carry on reading but you must pick one. Any questions that you have.*

**Quinton:** *Mam, why did John Brown use violence?*

**Ms Osteen:** *Sometimes it was the only language, it is fighting fire with fire. It is a pity because you know what, innocent people always where the worst thing about anything that got to do with violence is always children because they don't have a say in that and they always suffered the most. Okay any other question?*

**Nina:** *Mam why the people with power had to be so harsh on the other ones?*

**Ms Osteen:** *Well remember hundreds of years ago, life was quite harsh, people still hunted, it was not a civilised as now and I know that to say to someone “come and save us we are slaves” will probably not work very well.*

**Eli:** *Mam is it possible that people that were slaves then were mean to them? Let’s say I give my baby brother for free, will he go against me, how do you say he would not respect me mam because he will see me as threat.*

**Ms Osteen:** *None of that has got to do with that difficult culture of being the dominant.....There was also settlers that came from Europe so it is exactly the same thing that happened in America and the local people were used to that and there was a form of slavery yes in the early days, it is a very long sort of history, they struggled, history, you know slavery still goes on today, it is an existing thing until today, there are many things when children get abducted, taken to countries from the age of five to be human traffic and sex slaves to all kinds of horrible people that are perverts, that like to abuse children it is real. Unfortunately, it is a reality in many of these Eastern countries, there are women that are being abducted, it is still happening till this day, there are still forms of slavery .....you know people carry on being greedy and it is all about wealth, making money at the end of the day. (Ms Osteen, Classroom Observation, 28 May 2014).*

The answer given above by *Ms Osteen* on use of violence by the masters on slaves as a matter of ‘fighting fire with fire’ was misleading. This could be seen as a justification for the use of violence on slaves by masters. Violence was not necessarily a response to slave violence but rather a way of intimidating them into submission. It was rather a weapon and culture that became central to the practice of slavery. *Ms Osteen* also went to state that harsh treatment of slaves was attributable to the fact that ‘life was quite harsh’. This somehow creates an impression that slavery and violence were inevitable as it was a time of ‘harsh’ life. The teacher contradicted herself by noting that children of slaves were the worst off from the violence meted out to them. She also went on to point to the continued practice of slavery and its detrimental affect mainly on women and children. The manner in which she responded in detail to the questions posed by learners created an impression that her approach created opportunities to learn in the class.

#### **6.4.2 Grade 6 classroom lessons**

Observed decorations on the walls of the classroom were of all the learners’ birth dates, the class time table and Grade 6 English and Social Science topics. There were no pictures on the



walls that illustrated racial diversity in this classroom. This suggested that none of the learners could see their race and culture represented in the class decorations. However, that may not necessarily have been a challenge since there was no bias towards a particular race.

#### **6.4.2.1 Lesson Observation 4 – Grade 6 Social Science**

The lesson observed consisted of 31 learners, that is, 16 girls and 15 boys. Learners were seated in pairs. There were 30 black African learners and one Asian learner. The teacher, *Ms Petersen*, was Indian and English speaking. This environment provides an opportunity for learners to learn from someone from a different cultural background making learning exciting.

The time factor appeared to be a constraint to the provision of equal opportunities to learn during this lesson. This was a 30-minute lesson which ran from 10:00 to 10:30. The lesson was divided into two components: the first 15 minutes of the lesson focused on marking the previous day's homework and the second 15 minutes was channelled to teaching and learning. *Ms Petersen* began the lesson by explaining to the learners about the marks for their research on the brochure and the marks for the speech that learners had prepared. She then explained to the learners what they were expected to do at the beginning of the Social Science lesson. She requested learners to mark the Social Sciences work that they had done the previous day. Learners were marking activity 3.4 in their *Solutions for all, Grade 6 Social Sciences textbook*, published by *Macmillan* (Ranby & Zimmerman, 2012). *Ms Petersen* read the questions aloud from the textbook and learners raised their hands in order to provide the correct answers. The previous day's work was about providing three skills for the professions given in the textbook that are needed for the professionals to perform their duties. The textbook was used as the main resource for this activity and the teaching method was primarily question and answer. The excerpt below demonstrates how *Ms Petersen* began her lesson:

*“Ms Petersen: Your research for the brochure is a separate mark and your prepared speech is a separate mark. The information for the two things is one. For today, Social Sciences, we are marking yesterday's work, we are marking activity 3.4., here you have to look at the photos*

and answer question around that. We did question 1, am I right? We went through question 2, is that correct?

**Learners:** Yes.

**Ms Petersen:** Then question number 3, read question number 3, Linda, please.

**Linda is reading a passage from the textbook.**

**Ms Petersen:** Ok Linda, which posts did you choose?

**Linda:** Ma'am, I chose number 5 and number 1.

**Ms Petersen:** Ok, give me, read for me number 5, firstly you have to list 3 skills a lawyer needs to have to perform his or her job.

**Linda:** Ma'am, I said he needs to work with people well, he needs to help with bail and justice.

**Ms Petersen:** Ok, with the lawyer, he obviously needs to stand up for people's rights. He must work with people well, he must know the law really well if he or she is going to represent you and obviously he needs to be really qualified legally to be able to do those things. I can't just say I have got excellent knowledge of the law, I read plenty novels and I watched lots of detectives' stories on TV and I will be able to assist you, can I do that?

**Learners:** No.

**Ms Petersen:** I can't, I don't have something that is very important, I don't have qualifications, ok, so a lawyer must have a good knowledge of the law and he has to have qualifications. Alright, how will he have gotten these skills?

**Karabo:** Ma'am, he, eeee, he has to go to university.

**Ms Petersen:** He must go to university. And there is another very important thing lawyers must do.

**Joel:** Ma'am, they need a qualification.

**Ms Petersen:** We know that, they need qualification, they need to register with a council, a particular group of people that will allow him to practice, like when you want to be a doctor, and you have to register with a medical health council, ok, they are a body where you get a practice number, you can't just go and study and say I have got a qualification, they are a body that controls the people, they'll give you a practice number, they'll allow you to practice. With lawyers as well, there is a board of council that they must join that will authorize or validate that they are lawyers. All these must be done. Eeeeeee, let's see, Thato whom did you choose?

**Karel:** I am choosing number two.

**Ms Petersen:** Of the mechanic, right three skills of the mechanic.

**Karel:** He must repair the cars, fixing the cars.

**Ms Petersen:** He must have a good knowledge of car, firstly and what else?

**Karel:** And he must know the right sizes.

**Ms Petersen:** *What about he must know the right tools to use as well, you kind try to change a wheel with a screw driver, no, he must be able to know what the tools are used for, how will he learn all this information? What could he have done?*

**Geraldine:** *He would have gone to a college.*

**Ms Petersen:** *A college, a technical college, especially when you are doing technical things, he will learn at the technical college or Technikon, ok, what else.*

**Jabu:** *He must study mechanical engineering.*

**Ms Petersen:** *He has to study mechanical engineering or study a Technikon and do something in mechanics, he has to study, some of the very old mechanics did not necessarily studied, they will just be very skilled, they watch people fixing cars and do certain things and they learn, especially with mechanics, sometimes they have apprenticeships, do you know what is apprenticeships?" (Ms Petersen, Classroom Observation, 16 April 2014).*

While a textbook was used as a resource for the exercise, *Ms Petersen* demonstrated an understanding of the subject matter on the different professions and trades. This was observed in the above extract where she explained the qualifications of a doctor and lawyer and what they must do after obtaining their qualifications before they could start practicing as doctors or lawyers. She further provided detailed information to the learners about what mechanics must study at the Technikon or technical college, what skills they must acquire at the institution of higher learning and what tools they need to utilise when performing their duties. While having knowledge about the topic might seem to enable the provision of equal opportunities to learn, however, as already indicated above, the question and answer method of learning appears to be a constraint as not all learners were actively participating in answering the questions raised by the teacher. The teacher also focused mainly on the learners who were actively engaged in the exercise while she overlooked those who were not paying attention, and there was no way in which she tried to bring them into the learning process. This could have been a result of the time constraints and the pressure to finish the lesson on time.

I observed that there were disruptive learners in the class that took the teacher's attention and this led to some time-wasting, limiting opportunities to learn for their peers. The learners who responded to teacher's questions and those who asked questions where they did not understand were the ones who benefited from the lesson in terms of gaining more

understanding of the content of the lesson. Further, the manner in which active participants engaged in the discussion showed that they were also knowledgeable. They were not necessarily passive recipients of knowledge. Their interaction made a positive contribution to epistemological access.

The teacher also gave an opportunity to ask questions based on the topic of the lesson. For instance, one learner asked *Ms Petersen* if a Pretoria Technical High School provided similar programmes as a technical college. Another learner also asked *Ms Petersen* if a person can learn by observing other people and not by enrolling at an institution. When responding to these two questions posed by learners, *Ms Petersen* demonstrated some understanding of the subject matter. She responded in this manner:

***Ms Petersen:*** *When you finish your Grade 9, you can leave school and go to these technical colleges and you can advance on your technical skills and that is still by the Department of Education, and then you go and do these skills that are very technical like hairdressing, beauty therapy, and lots of technical stuff, like mechanical motor vehicle, mechanics, etc., you can go into these colleges and you can get qualifications, ok.*

***Laura:*** *Ma'am, also Pretoria Technical High School.*

***Learners:*** *Yes ... No.*

***Ms Petersen:*** *No Pretoria Technical College is like a high school, that you can go, and you can learn those things and when you finish, you are finishing matric from that school, ok, not from just a college.*

***Charlotte:*** *Mam, can't you just watch other people and learn from them?*

***Ms Petersen:*** *Yes, that is an apprenticeship, but you need a qualification, these people will have to study something to get these things, alright?" (Ms Petersen, Classroom Observation, 16 April 2014).*

The above discussion showed that the teacher was biased towards formal education. When the student asked whether someone can learn from watching other people she said that they can only learn from people with a qualification. However, this is not entirely true because there are people who have learnt from people that have never been to any formal institution. It is understandable that when dealing with young learners it may be advantageous to promote formal education. However, the limitation of this notion is that it assumes that all

learners have the capacity to acquire a formal qualification and this is not entirely true. This approach makes people without formal qualification look inferior. Inherently, when the learners grow older they may think that they can only learn from people with formal skills. This reduces life options, particularly for the learners that may not manage to acquire formal education at the tertiary level even if they are gifted due to challenges such as poverty.

The second part of the lesson was based on the topic about *“Resources and values”*. Ms Petersen began this part of the lesson by reminding learners that there are natural resources and raw materials. The whole lesson was also delivered using the question and answer method. The Grade 6 Social Sciences textbook published by MacMillan (Ranby & Zimmerman, 2012) was used as a teaching and learning resource. Ms Petersen began the lesson by asking learners about the differences between natural resources and raw materials. Learners raised up their hands to provide answers to the question. This is how Ms Petersen started the second section of the lesson:

*“Ms Petersen: When you finish marking.....now we are looking at resources and values, very important, resources and values, remember we have natural resources and raw materials, what are natural resources and raw materials? Nkosi?”*

*Nkosi: Ma’am, natural resources are like.....*

*Ms Petersen: Are like what? Where do we get these natural resources, Vusi, Thabo is giving you the answer but when we are in the exams, Thabo won’t be seating next to you and say Vusi here is the answer. How many times do I tell you not to whisper an answer in somebody’s ears because you are not helping them Thabo?*

*Daniel: Nature.*

*Ms Petersen: Nature, so what else do we get from nature that’s raw material?*

*Tumi: Minerals.*

*Ms Petersen: Yes, minerals, gold, iron, etc. Those are the things that we get from the ground. So, all these things, we take them and make stuff, they become, what did we call when we take them and make something? Lorraine?*

*Lorraine: They are making resource.*

*Ms Petersen: Making resource? No, Lorraine. Nelson? What do we turn, take a piece of wood and I make a chair, what does it become?*

*Nelson: Processed material.*

**Ms Petersen:** *It becomes a processed material and it becomes a manufactured product, ok, if I take a piece of wood and I make a desk and I then say this is my desk and I am going to sell it now, so I have manufactured it and I made a desk, ok. So, these pictures here are manufactured products made from natural resources and we have added a value to it, ok. If I made a desk, can I go and sell this wooden desk for R20,000?*

**Learners:** No.

**Ms Petersen:** *No, straight away you will know that that value is wrong. How do we work out the value of the products we are selling?*

**Hannah:** *Mam, we usually look at the size, the name, the width ne, and check how much you are going to sell it for.*

**Ms Petersen:** *Ok, so, how much will you sell this desk?*

**Hannah:** *This one mam?*

**Ms Petersen:** Yes

**Hannah:** *Ehh, R250*

**Learners:** *Noooooo*

**Ms Petersen:** *If, I make this desk cost R10, how is that justified? What I am trying to say is that the value added to something often must go into it, remember, you paid for the raw materials coupled together with somebody skilled to make it and anything else that goes with the product, ok, like we said and we going to deal with it later, cocoa, why is cocoa beans cheaper than the chocolate? Why?*

**Loreto:** *Ma'am, because it is a raw material"* (Ms Petersen, Classroom Observation, 16 April 2014).

During the presentation of this lesson, I observed how *Ms Petersen* chose learners to provide the answers. The approach was to choose them haphazardly regardless of whether a learner had raised his or her hand up and this was good in making learning inclusive and also determining the level of understanding that learners were having on the subject matter. *Ms Petersen* pointed at *Nkosi* to give the answer but *Nkosi* did not know the answer. The learner who was seated next to *Nkosi* tried to assist *Nkosi* by whispering the answer in his ear, but *Ms Petersen* reprimanded him not to tell *Nkosi* the answer. This indicated that *Ms Petersen* tried to encourage learners to learn by themselves and not depend on other learners to provide them with answers.

Ms Petersen continued to demonstrate knowledge about the subject area. She explained to the learners that raw materials were less expensive compared to the manufactured goods. She gave an example of a car and the materials that were used to manufacture the car. She explained how the price of a car was more expensive than the price of raw materials which are used to produce a car. She further asked learners about the connection between the raw materials and the manufactured goods. This how she puts it:

***Ms Petersen:** Raw materials such as wood or rubber and copper are sold at low prices than manufactured goods, the price of one car is much higher than the price of all the raw materials that the car is made up of. That is true, the price of a car is more expensive than the price of raw materials that are used to put into that car, okay, that is important. Remember the manufactured goods are more expensive because of all that goes into making that product..... How much is a new vehicle cost? Lorraine?*

***Lorraine:** R300 000.00.*

***Ms Petersen:** Alright, what is the connection between the car and the iron ore? Mavis?*

***Mavis:** The car is made up of the iron ore.*

***Ms Petersen:** The car is made up of the iron ore, the ton of iron ore might cost R1500, we are not necessarily going to use it the whole tonne to manufacture the car, okay, that amount is going to even be the less as compared to how much is going to be used for the car, the brand-new car including what is going into that car is going to cost R300, 000, 00. Can you see how the raw material is far cheaper or cost less than the actual manufactured products? Okay, why do you think the iron ore worth so much less than the car? Bophelo?*

***Bophelo:** Mam, the iron ore is a natural resource.*

***Ms Petersen:** It is a natural resource, okay, it is far less than what goes into the car" (Ms Petersen, Classroom Observation, 16 April 2014).*

In the above lesson, it was clear that maintaining discipline forms part of maintaining access to opportunities to learn. Disruptive learners have the potential to make the provision of learning difficult, thus epistemological access would be limited. I observed Ms Petersen reprimanding a learner who was not paying attention to what was discussed. She discovered that this learner was busy spinning a coin on the table while other learners were participating in the class discussion. She instructed the learner to stand up in front of other learners with one leg without touching the floor. This approach was instilling a culture of discipline in learners, and that was vital to enabling epistemological access. This was observed in the following excerpt:

***“Ms Petersen: Jannie stand up you have been spinning the coin on the desk before.***

***Jannie: No, mam.***

***Ms Petersen: That is not acceptable, you have been rubbing on that chair, and you’ll fall down, stand up, don’t touch anything, and just stand up”*** (Ms Petersen, Classroom Observation, 16 April 2014).

As observed in the other lessons, this lesson relied on the question and answer method and the textbook was used as the main source to deliver the lesson. To a limited extent, I established that what *Ms Petersen* said during the interview regarding the teaching methods varied with what happened in the classroom during the delivery of the lessons. During the interview, she indicated that she uses different methods of teaching such as learner-centred methods where learners learn by doing, visuals, video clips, etc., but she seemed to rely only on the question and answer method and textbooks as the only resources. As usual, I also observed that not all the learners participated in the question and answer as some seemed to be not concentrating on what was said by the teacher while others appeared not to know the answers to the questions posed by the teacher. Learners who actively participated appeared to have a better opportunity to get an understanding of the content of the subject than those who did not. The limitation of the lesson was that the teacher did not use varying teaching styles to cater for different learning abilities. To an extent, the style of teaching employed constrained the provision of equal opportunities to learn to those learners that do not participate because they could have been shy or not knowing the answers.

As noted in the other lessons, time allocated to the lesson also seemed to be inadequate for learners as *Ms Petersen* concluded the lesson by explaining to the learners that they would continue with same lesson the following day. This to me was an indication that the time allotted for the second part of the lesson was not sufficient to exhaust all the information that needed to be conveyed to the learners. It seemed that the question and answer method was time consuming and that there may be a need to explore other teaching methods. The provision of equal opportunities to learn is reliant on adequate time being assigned to the delivery of the lesson and the application of diverse methods used to dispense the subject matter.



#### **6.4.2.2 Lesson Observation 5 – Grade 6 English lesson**

The class observed consisted of 32 learners, that is, 16 girls and 16 boys and the teacher was *Ms Petersen*. In terms of racial distribution, there was only one Asian learner and the rest of the learners were black Africans. These were not the same learners that I had observed during the Social Science lesson. The learners were seated in pairs.

The lesson that I observed shortly after the Grade 6 Social Science was English. It was also allocated 30 minutes and it ran from 11:00 until 11:30. The lesson was also divided into two sections. The first part of the lesson was dedicated to marking the previous day's homework while the second part was about teaching and learning on "*infinite and finitive verbs*". Learners spent about ten minutes marking each other's work.

At the start of the lesson, *Ms Petersen* reprimanded learners who were making a noise and requested them to fold their arms. When everyone was quiet, she informed learners that they would be going to the computer centre in the next period. *Ms Petersen* informed the learners that she was going to pair them for the research work that they were expected to do at the computer centre. She then paired them randomly. After pairing learners, she told them not to forget to take their communication books and the pamphlet that they were given for their research work at the computer centre. Learners were then requested to take out their GDE's *Platinum English Home Language textbooks* (Cato, Crane, Krone, Maho, Middleton Horn, Omar, Pitt & Tsilik, 2012), published by *Maskew Miller Longman* and to open pages 80 to 81.

Learners who did not do the work and those who did not finish their work or had no pencils to mark the work were reprimanded. *Ms Petersen* asked one of the learners to write down the names of the learners who did not do the homework. She then moved around the class checking whether learners had done their work. She said that the names of those who had not done their work would be recorded. As she moved around, she discovered that some of

the learners had just started doing the work while the work of others was incomplete or they had not followed the instructions such as underlining the work. *Ms Petersen* then requested learners to exchange their books with their neighbours so that they could mark each other's work. She continued to reprimand learners who did not have pencils and indicated that their work would not be marked. The extract below demonstrates what *Ms Petersen* said to the learners:

***Ms Petersen:*** Right, who did not do their homework, stand up, who did not do the work stand up. Right, Lesedi, there is a piece of paper, write down names of those who did not do the work, Lihle did not do the work, (Educator is moving around checking if learners have done their work).

***Lihle:*** Mam I did the work.

***Ms Petersen:*** It does not matter, you started doing it today in class, Thato as well, write down his name.

***Kgaogelo:*** Mam, must I have underlined my work?

***Ms Petersen:*** Of course, you should have underlined your work, it was an instruction. Koketso's work is not finished. That's fine, sit, sit, that's enough. Lesedi, Aubrey and Buhle, write down their names, at the end of the period they are going to get demerits, it was very simple, and they got homework yesterday. And the reason I am being very hard on you is that you had time to finish your work in class, and I made it clear to you that when the period ends that this is a homework, now you did not bother to do it yesterday, you just do what was done in class and you just left there. If you did not underline, you must redo the work, you know the rules, you follow the rules. What Thato, what?

***Thato:*** Mam I forgot to underline some.

***Ms Petersen:*** You forgot to underline some?

***Thato:*** Yes.

***Ms Petersen:*** Really Thato?

***Thato:*** Yes.

***Ms Petersen:*** Really Thato? Right, sit down, sit down, I don't want to hear you arguing. Right, swap your homework books with your neighbour please, go through their work and mark it. Excuse me Kgopotso, go through it and you will know what is happening, if you did not underline, you must redo the work, you know the rules, you follow the rules. Why are arguing? Lesedi, write their names down, those who do not have stationery, no stationery at school, which means she does not have a pencil to mark.

***Lucy:*** Mam, can I give her a pencil?

***Ms Petersen:*** No, she must sit there with no pencil, so your book is not being marked" (*Ms Petersen, Classroom Observation, 16 April 2014*).

This lesson was unique because it provided learners with an opportunity to mark each other's homework as this was usually the role mainly done by teachers. It gave learners an impression that they were capable of performing some of the tasks done by teachers if they were guided properly. This also provided them with the experience as to what happens when their work is marked. This process served to acknowledge and enable learner agency. It also helped in improving epistemological access. Regrettably, learners were not given an opportunity to provide feedback about their experiences of marking each other's work. This did not provide learners with an opportunity to share what they learnt from marking each other's work. It was also not clear whether they understood what was expected of them when marking. This denied learners the opportunity to learn from each other and to an extent hindered the provision of equal opportunities to learn as sharing knowledge was going to assist them to learn from one another.

After learners marked each other's work, *Ms Petersen* requested them to put their books aside and open page 81 of their *Platinum English textbooks* where they were to learn about "*finite and infinite verbs*". The lesson was textbook-based and the chalkboard was used to clarify certain concepts. As usual with *Ms Petersen*, the lesson was based on the question and answer method. Some of the learners actively participated during the lesson. For example, before *Ms Petersen* even started explaining what "*infinite verb*" or "*finite verb*" are, one of the learners asked the question of whether "*infinite verb*" is a pronunciation. Another learner asked the reason why there is always a word "*is*" when talking about a person who is doing something. While *Ms Petersen* was busy responding to the questions posed by some of the learners, she also reprimanded those learners who were making noise. The following passage demonstrates the questions by learners and how *Ms Petersen* handled noisy learners during the lesson:

***Ms Petersen:*** *Once you have finished marking you can put away you GDE books. Right, put away you GDE books and please take out your textbooks. Right, on page 81 we are doing finite and infinite verbs.*

***Kamogelo:*** *Ma'am, it's infinite (pronunciation)*

***Ms Petersen:*** *If I choose to call it tomato and you choose to call it tomato (pronunciation), it does not mean the word is different, good.*

***Thuto:*** *Ma'am, can I ask you a question about English.*

**Ms Petersen:** Yes.

**Thuto:** So, like why all the time when you want to say like a person, in present tense, why like you say a person is jumping or a person is playing, why always put an “is” before the verb?

**Ms Petersen:** Because they are doing that at that point in time.

**Thuto:** But then why does it have a helping verb?

**Ms Petersen:** Because, can you say the person jumping? The person is doing an action, that verb that requires that needs a helping verb, a helping verb is an auxiliary verb. Right, that’s a whole different lesson because it doesn’t grammatically sound correct if you do not have something to help that verb. Zarina?

**Zarina:** But you can say a person jumps without the word “is”.

**Ms Petersen:** Everyone is going to meet me after break, write their names down on a piece of paper. Kano, you will meet after break because you were making noise, Bonolo who was making noise in your row?

**Bonolo:** Ma’am, me I was not making noise, I was reading.

**Ms Petersen:** Kago, your row? Thato, were you talking?

**Thato:** Ma’am, I just look that side.

**Ms Petersen:** You were looking and you were not talking? Katlego who was talking? No one? Nomsa?

**Nomsa:** No, ma’am, I was not talking,

**Ms Petersen:** Right, Thato I will see you after break

**Thato:** Haaa ma’am” (Ms Petersen, Classroom Observation, 16 April 2014).

Classroom management was an instrument used to ensure the provision of learning without disturbances. Disruptive learners lost the opportunity to learn compared to others as they were not listening to what the teacher was saying. Learners who seemed to be gaining knowledge and understanding were those who were actively participating during the class compared to those who did not. English as a language of teaching and learning did not appear to be easy for learners to engage with as the majority of learners’ home language was not English. The questions that learners asked suggested that they needed more understanding of the verbs. This showed that the majority of the learners whose first language was not English did not have the skills to cope with a first language background. However, this did not imply that these learners were intellectually deficient. To some of the learners, English

seemed to be an obstacle in terms of the provision of opportunities to learn as it was not their mother tongue.

Learners were given an opportunity to explain the difference between “*infinite and finite verbs*”. They responded to the question and *Ms Petersen* gave some additional clarity where learners seemed not to have answered the questions properly. This revealed that *Ms Petersen* had knowledge about the subject matter, particularly because English was her first language. However, it did not assist non-English speaking learners as they appeared to require more knowledge and understanding about certain concepts. This is how the lesson continued:

***Ms Petersen:*** Right, we are doing verbs, who can tell me what a finite verb is?

***Lira:*** A finite verb is a subject.

***Ms Petersen:*** Right, what is a subject?

***Lira:*** Ma’am, a subject can be singular or....

***Ms Petersen:*** What is a subject? That is the first question.

***Lira:*** Ma’am, a subject is the first word before the verb.

***Ms Petersen:*** The first word before the verb that is a subject? As Vuyo put it “a boy is jumping”, you said a subject is a word that goes before the verb, and then what is a subject?

***Keith:*** Ma’am, a subject is who or what is being acted upon.

***Ms Petersen:*** Good, alright, a subject is who or what is being acted upon, alright, “the boy is jumping”, in that sentence, what is a subject? Hellen?

***Hellen:*** The boy.

***Ms Petersen:*** The boy. If I say, “he ran to the shop” what is the subject there? Aubrey

***Aubrey:*** He.

***Ms Petersen:*** The person who is running. Okay, when we are looking at the finite verb we are saying they are verbs that can stand alone, they don’t need anything (word) to assist them, alright, and they are your stand-alone verbs. Paul, read for me and give me the definition in the textbook.

***Paul is reading.***

***Ms Petersen:*** Right what do we mean by “it can be singular or plural”?

***Nomsa,*** Ma’am, is like referring to the word as singular or plural.

***Ms Petersen:*** Okay, let’s look here (*Ms Petersen is writing on the board*), we have a subject and a verb, this verb, we did this when we were talking about subject and verb agreement, when we have a verb here and a subject here, this here will determine whether a verb is going

to be changed or not, if I say, "I said to her that she is pretty", what is my verb in this sentence?  
Tabitha?

**Tabitha:** Said.

**Ms Petersen:** Said, is it singular or plural?

**Learners:** Singular.

**Ms Petersen:** Right, if I must change this to a plural, what do I have to do with this?

**Sharla:** Change the word into "says".

**Ms Petersen:** If I must change this subject and make it plural, then I must change my verb to suit that. Okay, that is what we talk about when we need to adjust, we did this when we did subject and verb agreement. Look at the examples that are given in the textbook, "mom says hello", how many moms are there?

**Bonie:** One.

**Ms Petersen:** One, alright, if I must say, "the moms", will I say the moms says hello?

**Learners:** No.

**Ms Petersen:** Then I am wrong, if I have two subjects, what need to happen to my verb?  
Koketso?

**Koketso:** It must change ma'am.

**Ms Petersen:** It must change, what happen there?

**Dumisani:** It will become....

**Ms Petersen:** It will become, "the moms say"

**Learners:** The moms say.

**Ms Petersen:** Okay, so can you see that those two must agree. So that is why we say here, it must have a subject and a tense and it can't be singular or plural, "Stella was in the water", that is giving us a tense, how do we know that? How do we know? Nomsa?

**Nomsa:** Ma'am, because it is telling us when she was in the water.

**Ms Petersen:** It is telling us when she was in the water, what tense is she telling us?

**Dumisani:** Past tense.

**Ms Petersen:** Past tense, if I tell you "Stella is going to pour water into the juice", what tense it is?

**Toko:** Future tense.

**Ms Petersen:** Future tense, once she is telling us, something has already happened. Then look at the second part, what is infinitive verb? Infinitive verb? Nomsa?

**Nomsa:** Infinitive verb are the forms of a verb, for example (Nomsa reads on the book)

**Ms Petersen:** In your own words, what is an infinitive verb?

**Nomsa:** Out of what I read here?

**Ms Petersen:** Yes, out of what you read there, in your own words.

**Nomsa:** Infinitive verb is some verb..... ma'am I don't know.

**Ms Petersen:** Okay, an infinitive verb cannot stand alone, it is a verb that must have a helping verb that goes with it and one of the most common forms is when you have the word "to" before the verb, "he is going to swim", so the "to" and the "swim" will go together. "He is going to jump", "he is going to swim", alright, "he is going to sing". When you see the word "to" straight away you must know that is an infinitive verb, does everybody understand that? So, what is the difference between the two "finitive and infinitive verbs? I have given you the definitions of both, so what is the difference between the two?

**Hellen:** mam, finite verb does not use another verb to help it.

**Ms Petersen:** Okay, it can stand on its own, good, and then what is the other one?

**Ana:** Infinitive verb is like a helping verb....

**Ms Petersen:** A helping verb, be careful, it is not just any helping verb, it is in particular with the word "to", alright, like Vuyo's situation, is "is" going to be an infinitive verb?

**Learners:** No.

**Ms Petersen:** No. right, we are going to the computer centre, Kamo we are almost finished, pack up" (Ms Petersen, Classroom Observation, 16 April 2014).

The time allocated for this lesson appeared to be adequate because *Ms Petersen* managed to finish the lesson on time, and learners had access to the opportunity to learn. Learners were also given an opportunity to read from the textbooks. Even though the chalkboard was used during this lesson, the textbook appeared to be the main source of information for teaching and learning. This implied that the time assigned to this lesson had positive implications in terms of the provision of equal opportunities to learn because learners were engaged in the lesson and had time to ask questions where they did not understand.

#### **6.4.2.3 Lesson Observation 6 – Grade 6 Social Science lesson**

The class was taught by *Ms Petersen* and it consisted of 31 learners, that is, 16 girls and 15 boys. The majority of learners were Black Africans and there was only one Coloured learner. Learners were seated in pairs.

This was a 30 minutes lesson which ran from 12:15 to 12:45. Teaching was based on the chalkboard, a map and question and answer method. The lesson was also divided into two sections. During the first part of the lesson, learners rehearsed their respective poems given to them in preparation for the upcoming speech festival. *Ms Petersen* requested each of the learners who would be participating in the speech festival to recite their poems in front of everyone. As learners recited their poems, *Ms Petersen* praised those learners who narrated their poems fluently without stammering and she also corrected those who were still not confident in narrating their poems. *Ms Petersen* commended and corrected every learner after they presented their poems as follows:

*“Beautiful, well done, I like your voice. It projects well, when you love your words you will be able to look around a little bit more, which you are doing well now. I think you’ll be a bit more confident and you must stand very still and your hands behind your back okay. But at the moment very good and just a little bit more expression with words because it just seems like you are using one tone the whole time, you must vary your tone a little bit okay” (Ms Petersen, Classroom Observation, 15 May 2014).*

*“Good alright what I need you to do, you need just to be a little bit louder, once you learn your poem you will be able to stand still with your hands behind your back and be able to look around at your audience okay. You will need to be a little more expressive, I do like the piece of your poem I think you not rushing it, you are taking it slowly, carefully pronouncing your words and that’s good. Maybe you just need to use a little bit more expression when speaking like certain words you need to express them a little bit more okay. But other than that, I don’t have a problem with the way you’ve pronounced, it I think when you are presenting you need to, may be, stand a little more to the front so that it shows a little bit more confidence and then you will be able to put your hands at the back and then carry on. Letta come and stand here in the middle, confidently and hands behind your back, right the name of your poem and the person who wrote it” (Ms Petersen, Classroom Observation, 15 May 2014).*

*“Okay Letta it looked like a song that you were doing which I don’t really like, I like your words to be completely around it and the sentence to end I don’t want you to sing it too loudly okay and be a little bit louder and more expression. You are presenting a very nice poem about Mrs Mcque you get so confused about everything okay, so you must be able to show that but so far well done by.....you are the only one so far that I have countered that has actually taken the time to learn all the words which is good, alright. We are going to be practicing every day because these learners are your audience so you need to start getting confident in front of them because you are going to have a room full of people okay, so a little bit louder, a little bit more expression not so much of singing a song like you singing more of expression okay, Kholo come” (Ms Petersen, Classroom Observation, 15 May 2014).*



*“Right thank you Kholo you have improved a little bit, you were a bit louder but I also wanted a little bit more of facial expression would be nice and vary your tone a little bit I know you said please Mrs Burglar but you must just do a little bit more expression” (Ms Petersen, Classroom Observation, 15 May 2014).*

I established the fact that not all learners were going to participate in the speech festival. All learners underwent auditions and those who were found to recite the poems better were selected. The fact that all learners were provided with opportunity to audition suggests that they were provided with equal opportunities to learn.

The theme of the lesson was *“Explorers from Europe to southern Africa”*. The lesson was from page 65 of the Social Sciences textbook published by Macmillan (Ranby & Zimmerman, 2012). *Ms Petersen* seemed experienced on the subject matter. For instance, she showed learners a diagram and asked them the questions based on the diagram. She explained that during the Renaissance period in 1300, when there was a sudden growth in learning, art, science and culture; people from Europe started to go out and explore the world to learn about other countries and to discover new things that will change their lives forever. She explained that a change was happening in the European society, where traders wanted to discover new ways to reach East Asia. In addition, she described that knowledge, ideas and new technologies from China and Arab countries were being introduced to Europe. Furthermore, she indicated that scholars and artists in Europe became more interested in studying the world around them. While *Ms Petersen* was talking, she saw that some learners were not listening as they looked sleepy and she rebuked them. She continued to teach and discipline some of the learners at the same time. The excerpt below demonstrates how the lesson unfolded:

*“Ms Petersen: And then you are going to turn to page number 65 in your Social sciences textbooks. Alright, we are starting the next section now, it is going to be our history, okay, and we are going to be looking at “explorers” from Europe find Southern Africa Where is Europe on the map?*

*Kamo: Ma’am it’s in the North.*

*Ms Petersen: It is in the North okay, can we look at the globe, here is South Africa, Europe is here, can everybody see, it is the section here so my finger is here on South Africa and here is Europe, if you travel from South Africa to go to Europe, you will go in which direction?*

*Pat: I will go North.*

**Ms Petersen:** You will go North, and if the explorers were coming to South Africa which direction were they coming from?

**Nomsa:** South.

**Ms Petersen:** Okay, so we have explorers that are arriving, we are going to be looking at a very specific time period okay. So, let's look at all these points now, we are going to look at how early explorers from Europe came to Southern Africa. We are also going to look at the renaissance period in Europe and this is in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century, what years is that? Thuto.

**Thuto:** The 1300.

**Ms Petersen:** Good it's the 1300; 15<sup>th</sup> century to 16<sup>th</sup> century means we are spending the time period from the 1300 to the 1500 okay, so we will look at the renaissance, what is the renaissance? John?

**John:** It is regarded as the renaissance time periods for people who lived in the 15<sup>th</sup> or 16<sup>th</sup> century.

**Ms Petersen:** Okay the renaissance is regarded as one of the most interesting time period of the people, what started to happen during that time period in Europe was that change was happening in Europe. Knowledge, ideas and new technologies from China and Arab countries were introduced in Europe and people decided to go out and started to explore the world, what do you think happened? Keke what do you think happened? Whenever I look at you, you look sleepy.

**Keke:** Ma'am I am not sleepy.

**Ms Petersen:** Then why are you not listening? These people would discover new things, new things that would change their lives forever..... Who was Leonardo da Vinci, who was he Nomsa?

**Nomsa:** Ma'am I think he was an artist.

**Ms Petersen:** Yes, he was an artist, he was an adventurer, he was somebody who did wonderful things, Karabo what famous painting did he make?

**Karabo:** Ma'am is the Mona Lisa.

**Ms Petersen:** Good, the paint is the Mona Lisa. The Louvre Museum is a very famous art gallery, actually the museum, and people can go and da Vinci's paintings are there in the Louvre okay. There was another very important painting that he did as well from the Mona Lisa, then we are also going to look at how inventions such as gun powder, the magnetic compass and the caravan changed the world, what is a caravan, don't tell me it's a micro bus, Solly?

**Solly:** Ma'am it's a Portuguese sailing ship.

**Ms Petersen:** Well done it's a sailing ship because remember the Portuguese explored across the seas and we going to learn about some of them that went on something called the spice train, then we are going to look at the spread of the Christian religion in the world and how it spread out and how the people from non-Christian places became Christians because of the spread of Christianity, people arriving in their country teaching them about Christ, things like that. Then we are going to look at the importance of the train in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 16 centuries.

*Now Thando you can read, read Thando 14<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century. Thando from the 1300 to the 1500 okay, so that is the 14<sup>th</sup> to the 16<sup>th</sup> century, we are going to be looking at trade during that time we are also going to look at the new trade routes of the East Wired South Africa (Ms Petersen, Classroom Observation, 15 May 2014).*

Ms Petersen concluded the lesson by giving learners homework on page 98 of their English book. Most of Ms Petersen's lessons were divided in two parts, which revealed that time was not enough in terms of ensuring that adequate knowledge was imparted to learners. It appeared that the teacher expedited the lessons to make sure that by the end of the period she had covered the critical parts of the subject matter. This raises a question as to whether the learners understood the subject matter as the time for assessing their understanding was limited. This suggests that opportunities to learn for all learners were also constrained.

## **6.5 Conclusion**

This chapter discussed the findings of the study in the layer of culture, i.e., teachers' beliefs, values and understandings in order to uncover to what extent these ideational aspects enable or constrain the provision of equal opportunities to learn in racially diverse classrooms. Dominant discourses in terms of these understandings that were articulated by teachers were explored in this chapter.

One of these was teaching and learning strategies and resources employed in racially diverse classes. It was found that teachers relied mainly on prescribed textbooks and video clips as teaching resources, and on the question and answer method to assess learners' understanding of the subject matter. Teaching did not draw on methods such as enabling the learners to discuss issues in small groups so that they could have the opportunity to learn more from each other. There was a limited innovation from teachers in applying different methods to facilitate epistemological access.

Time allocated to the lesson was also found to be a constraining mechanism that could obstruct the provision of equal opportunities to learn. From my observations, it was evident that teachers mainly divided the lesson into two sections, as an attempt to ensure that the lesson was completed within 30 minutes. I found that, in most instances, time was not enough for all the activities that were planned for the 30 minutes slot and that this did not enable the provision of equal opportunities to learn for all learners.

An emerging discourse was that of the relationship between learners. The study found that local learners found it difficult to interact with international learners, while international learners could relate mainly among themselves. This situation had the potential to limit interaction amongst all the learners, constraining the opportunity for them to learn from each other. Culture was also found to impede the provision of equal opportunities to learn as both the international and indigenous learners were taught by teachers who came from different socio-cultural contexts.

The LOLT that was found to be a constraining mechanism in relation the provision of equal opportunities to learn in racially diverse classrooms. Data revealed that the majority of learners at this school are indigenous and that the LOLT in all school activities, e.g., teaching and learning, communication, material resources, is English, with Afrikaans as the second language. The LOLT affected learners' epistemological access as they were taught in the language that was not their mother tongue.

Code switching was another aspect that was found not benefiting all learners in terms of understanding the content of the lesson. A Grade 7 Social Science and English teacher is a first Afrikaans language speaking person and she used code switching to explain a terminology, that is, she first used Afrikaans language "*uitlander*" to explain the word "*outlander*" in English. While code switching might be viewed as an enabling mechanism for certain racial and cultural groups, it was in this case found to be inappropriate in racially diverse classrooms as it constrains the provision of equal opportunities to learn to some learners. It could also be

argued that his enhances the opportunities for more learners, especially those from Afrikaans background, to learn rather than restricting learning.

Another constraining mechanism in terms of the provision of equal opportunities to learn was the inability of the teacher to separate herself from the racial group represented in the lesson. In one of the Grade 7 Social Science lesson ("*yesterday's history, tomorrow's mystery*") that I have observed, I perceived that *Ms Osteen* (first Afrikaans language speaking teacher) saw herself as part of the Afrikaner family that was represented in the story. This was evident when she said, "*A family right, we have gathered here on the table, there is mom, dad and children*". This suggested that she saw herself as part of the family in the story since her racial group was represented.

The provision of opportunities to learn were also found to be affected by the movement of learners from one class to another. After one lesson, learners moved to another class to attend the next lesson. I observed that moving from one class to another consumed teaching and learning time and all learners lose opportunities to learn.

Finally, data revealed that disruptive learners during teaching and learning were a constraint to the provision of equal opportunities to learn as teachers did not pay full attention to curriculum implementation since they had to control noise makers while at the same time teaching and learning was taking place. This is not unique to Arabia Primary School.

In general, these findings revealed that, although the school as a structure has opened physical access to racially and culturally diverse learners, there are several underlying mechanisms that constrain the provision of equal opportunities to learn. The culture of the school, in terms of teaching and learning and some of the subject content, has not been adapted to suit racially and culturally diverse classrooms.

In the next chapter, I examine in more detail how agency is enabled or constrained in relation to the provision of equal opportunities to learn.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN: DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS ON AGENCY**

## 7.1 Introduction

This is the last chapter of my findings and discussion chapters in which I analyse data using Margaret Archer's Social Realist approach. In Chapter 5, data was analysed in the layer of structure. In Chapter 6, data was analysed in terms of the layer of culture. These two layers of structure and culture build what Margaret Archer called 'the parts' (Archer, 1995). In this chapter, I will consider 'the people' (the layer of agency) by focusing on whether their agency is enabled or constrained in relation to the provision of equal opportunities to learn in racially diverse classrooms.

Agency refers to the manner in which people are able or not to work out some kind of influence over their structural and cultural circumstances by virtue of their social roles and positions as well as their ability or constraints to stimulate their personal emergent properties and powers (PEPs) in those situations (Archer, 1995). Notably, while structures command the circumstance in which people live and work, agency provides the effective causes for what takes place in society as only people can act (Danermark, Ekstrom, Jakobsen & Karlsson, 2002). Archer (1995) is concerned with what stimulates agents to act in the manner in which they do, in relation to their particular structural and cultural contexts. While the structures and culture may enable or constrain people (teachers) with regard to the provision of equal opportunities to learn in racially diverse classrooms, people (teachers) have internal conversations and are able to utilise whatever cultural and material resources they have in innovative ways by stimulating their PEPs (Archer, 1995). Therefore, it is critical in research to investigate not only what the enabling or constraining elements in specific situations are, but also to establish what stimulates people to act in the manner in which they do and how they are able to apply agency and generate their PEPs (Sayer, 2002). Since agency appears from social interaction, I found it important in this study to find out how the school principal, teachers and learners are conditioned by their contexts.



In this chapter, I will discuss the ways in which school management (principal), teachers and learners were enabled or constrained in their abilities to apply agency in terms of the provision of equal opportunities to learn in racially diverse classrooms.

## **7.2 Agency of school management**

People in the social world occupy different positions, either through birth or by means of voluntary or involuntary appointment, which instil in them certain powers (Archer, 1995). People can be differentiated as corporate agents or primary agents (*ibid.*). Corporate agents are those who have power and influence while primary agents do not have such power and influence. As already noted, cooperative agency is when agents who have a shared interest become organised around particular goals and perform together in groups when striving to change society (Archer, 2002). In this study, data reveals that there were various committees within the school which, in conjunction with the school principal, the two deputy principals, HoDs and SGB members, form the management team of the school. Decisions were therefore made collectively. It was also evident that there were some important individuals (cooperative agents) within the management structures, such as the school principal, deputy principals and SGB who, by virtue of their roles and positions, could be regarded as being social actors who were able to exercise a significant amount of agency. As a result of the nature of cooperative governance policies, these social actors worked out their agency in terms of the operation of the school.

With regard to the role of the SGB, SASA (No. 84 of 1996) stipulates that the governing body is responsible for managing and controlling schools. SASA indicates that the role of the SGB is to, amongst others:

- Adopt a code of conduct for learners at the school,
- Start and administer a school fund,
- Buy textbooks, educational materials or equipment for the school,
- Administer and control the school's property, building and grounds,

- Determine times of the school day in line with any applicable conditions of employment of staff at the school,
- Paying for services to the school, and
- Decide on applications for exemptions from school fees.

While SASA (1996) provides that the school principal is responsible for professional management of the school, the Education Laws Amendment Act (ELAA) (No.31 of 2007) specifies that the school principal should, amongst others:

- Attend all SGB meetings and inform SGB about policy and legislations,
- Provide advice on which textbooks, educational materials and equipment to be bought by SGB and managing their use,
- Oversee the drawing up of the school's budget and provide support and guidance with regard to school's expenditure in consultation with the SGB.

The Education Laws Amendment Act (ELAA) (2007) also stipulates that the principal of a public school is responsible for preparing an annual report on the academic performance of the school and a breakdown of how the available resources have been used. It further specifies that the principal must prepare an academic improvement plan on a yearly basis and that this must be tabled at the governing body meeting. This gives an indication that the agency of the school management is conditioned by policies such as SASA (1996) and ELAA (2007) to carry out their duties in order to change or maintain the structure (school).

In relation to this study, the findings showed that the SGB, together with the school principal as well as the Finance Committee, were responsible for managing the finances of the school. The SGB also dealt with the infrastructure and maintenance matters of the school. Further, the findings indicated that 48 families were exempted from paying school fees since they could not afford it. This was in line with the requirement of SASA that no learner should be denied admission due to inability to pay school fees. This suggested that the admission policy of the school was linked to and guided by SASA.

Data revealed that the Heads of Departments (HoDs) were responsible for curriculum related issues such as curriculum delivery, accommodating learners with learning problems and the development of strategies to remediate the learning problems. They also dealt with teachers' attitudes towards their school work, including teachers who bunked classes or lessons. In other words, they provided curriculum leadership in their specific Learning Areas and took the lead in terms of ensuring that educators provided quality teaching and learning in the classrooms.

As already pointed out, cooperative agency is when agents who have a shared interest become organised around particular goals and perform together in groups when striving to change society. In relation to this study, the agency of management was such that it was in a position to apply its powers of critical reflection to enable or constrain the provision of equal opportunities to learn in racially diverse classes (Archer, 2002). The findings revealed that the school management together with the SGB exerted their agency by applying the Master Plan programme which comprised of the programmes such as remedial classes, CAMI programme, Strengths/Weaknesses/Opportunities/Threats (SWOT) analysis, the school's code of conduct and the discipline system. For example, the management at this school made the decision to buy computer programmes that enabled learners to improve their academic performance irrespective of their race, culture, religion, gender and socio-economic backgrounds. The remedial classes and CAMI programme were used to eliminate diverse academic challenges and to provide learners with equal opportunities to learn. The findings also revealed that parents, through the SGB, played a crucial role in coming up with the idea of buying the computer programmes since they believed they could assist in terms of improving reading skills, spelling skills and vocabulary of learners. As a result of the interaction between the leaders of the school (including members of the SGB) and the diplomats whose learners attend the school, the leaders of the school learnt from the diplomats about the education systems in their countries and integrated what they learnt into the programmes of the school in order to improve learners' academic performance. Thus, the school had programmes or policies in place that were positively driving its education system. According to the school principal, parents were also involved in mentoring the reading programmes at the school.

In relation to the CAMI programme, *Ms Petersen* stated that the programme was a specialised computer programme that enhanced learners' reading, comprehension, and listening skills. The programme assessed learners' abilities to read and could also identify learners who had reading problems. *Ms Petersen* explained in this way:

*"For English, we have a CAMI reader, it is a specialised computer program that enhances reading skills, listening skills, everything. The children go there, their profiles are already set up, so each has his or her own profile, each child is assessed at his or her own level, so you have given a page and you tell them right start reading, so they click the part that they needed to read, they read through and then they click at the end and the computer colour breaks this theme and from that work of the level that they should be and will only set task of that level, so they will be at that level and ones you get a print out of that level and you can say you are ready to move on to the next level, we have got that. And we have got another program called "readers are leaders", that works similar to CAMI but it doesn't work as well as CAMI, so even for Maths they got similar program, that's what we take the children to the computer centre, they have got the internet" (Ms Petersen, pers. comm., 16 April 2014).*

The findings also revealed that the school annually conducted a Strengths/Weakness/Opportunities/Threats (SWOT) analysis to help improve areas where the school did not perform well in the previous academic year. *Mr Norman* (school principal) explained that this began in 1996 when the management of the school decided to review the vision and mission of the school and to come up with the strategies to implement them. Since then, the parents of the school have been carrying out a SWOT analysis every August of each academic year, which was then examined further by the school management in order to come up with strategies to address challenges identified in the analysis. The principal of the school explained it as follows:

*"Mostly, I think the big effort started in 1996, when we really sat down and said guys where are we going, how are we going to get there? And what are we going to do to when we get there and then we started, we did a SWOT analysis, we are still doing it until today, every August..... every parent gets the SWOT analysis and they can write what is good, what is weak, what is this, what is that, and then we sit down as the management team and we say guys let's draw up our master plan, where must we concentrate, e.g., the reading, this and that and other schools are scared to do that, they are very scared to hear negative things" (Mr Norman, pers. Comm., 26 June 2014).*

From the above, it appears that the management of the school decided to have a school Master Plan due to the results of the SWOT analysis. It can be seen that social actors in the form of school management and parents had exercised their personal emergent properties (PEPs) to enhance the academic performance of the learners. It was also evident that the school management was actively involved in encouraging good academic performance of all learners through application of their agency, which ultimately served to enable the provision of equal opportunities to learn from racially and culturally diverse backgrounds.

The findings further revealed that the school had a detention system which was applied when unacceptable behaviour was displayed by learners. This disciplinary system existed because of a decision by the school management team to manage learners' conduct. One of the Grade 7 learners, *Eli* (pseudonym), stated that learners were punished for using bad language to other learners or for being discriminatory against foreign learners. *Sarah* (pseudonym) also indicated that they behaved according to the school's code of conduct and, irrespective of how angry one was, they tried by all means not to cross the line. *Nina* (pseudonym) further stated that if the school gave a learner several warnings and they were not heeded, such a learner ended up being suspended. Grade 7 learners put it as follows:

*"When you have done something wrong like swearing at someone or when you have crossed the line of boundaries about people's self-respect, we have a code of conduct, if you don't follow the code of conduct you could get a detention or get suspended or if you carry on breaking the code of conduct you can get expelled"* (Eli, pers. comm., 27 May 2014).

*"If we have a fight for fun we would never say hey you are a foreigner or go back where you come from we just know where the line is, we respect each other no matter how mean or angry the person can get, we just don't cross that line"* (Sarah, pers. comm., 27 May 2014).

*"Sometimes the school does not apply warnings if you continue with an unacceptable behaviour, if they gave you several warnings, they will just suspend you"* (Nina, pers. comm., 27 May 2014).

*"Well, we have a very good detention system here at school, if they put you on detention, on Friday afternoon you actually spend an hour or two writing school rules"* (Ibrahim, pers. comm., 27 May 2014).

*“And they do it on a Friday because they know on Fridays most people have plans so they take away your plans, so you are being punished on Friday. In fact, they don’t want us to discriminate one another but they want us to be one big family and show humanity (Ubuntu) to each other”* (Jan, pers. comm., 27 May 2014).

Further, learners indicated that a learner was not permitted to participate in school activities if that learner had been in detention twice due to unacceptable behaviour. For instance, they stated that when a learner did not do his or her homework or bullied other learners, that learner would be punished by not being allowed to take part in any school activities until his or her behaviour changed. This implied that the school was committed to promoting good manners and morals in children to enable them to positively contribute and fit into the broader society. The Grade 6 learners narrated an incident where a local learner had ill-treated a foreign learner. According to one of the learners, *Jan* (pseudonym), that learner was punished since the school did not encourage any form of discrimination by one learner to another. This is how *Jan*, *Marie* and *Quinton* (pseudonyms) narrated the incident:

*“Like remember about Trevor last year, they call him a lost foreigner by one of the learners and it was a very serious issue and they took that learner to a detention”* (Jan, pers. comm., 27 May 2014).

*“Mam we treat them like normal people, the way we are supposed to treat ourselves, we treat them like they are not foreigners and there were no incidents of any form of discrimination, not that of any that we should know of. If we have a fight for fun we would never say hey you are a foreigner or go back where you come from we just know where the line is, we respect each other no matter how mean or angry the person can get, we just don’t cross that line”* (Marie, pers. comm., 27 May 2014).

*“As an Arabian (the false name of the school), we are obliged to make them feel at home, we must be nice to them no matter what, where they come from, we try not to focus on their past but on their future, if we focus on their past they are going to be trouble students because they might come from a bad background and stuff like that and cause trouble to other students”* (Quinton, pers. comm., 27 May 2014).

The above citations demonstrate that the school was determined to provide equal treatment to all learners irrespective of the race, culture or socio-economic background. Accordingly, discrimination of any kind was not encouraged and a learner who practiced it was disciplined.

This implies that the school management, by virtue of the positions members occupied in the school, had the ability to exercise its agency in terms of ensuring that all learners were managed and controlled the same way so that they were provided with equal opportunities to learn in the classrooms.

### **7.3 The agency of teachers**

Data revealed that the school recruited teachers who specialised in the different Learning Areas that they teach. Some of the teachers who taught Maths and English had postgraduate degrees such as Honours Degrees and these teachers had the requisite content knowledge about their subject areas. For instance, *Ms Petersen* (a Grade 6 teacher) had an Honours degree and her major subjects were English and Social Science, while *Ms Osteen* (a Grade 7 teacher) had been teaching English for nineteen years since she joined the school in 1995.

*Ms Petersen* had this to say about her qualifications:

*"I am English first language speaker, I am formerly from KZN, and I am only being in Gauteng, Tshwane for 3 years. I started teaching at this school in April 2012. I qualified with my BA degree in 1997, with English and Geography as my major subjects. I did my Post-Graduate Certificate in Education 10 years later" (Mr. Petersen, pers. comm, 16 April 2014).*

*Ms Osteen* narrated her experience as follows:

*"I started teaching at the present school in 1995 till to date. I came to teach at the present school because there was a vacant English position and I have been teaching English from Grade 4 level to senior level classes throughout since I joined this school. I have been teaching English for 19 years of teaching" (Ms Osteen, pers. comm, 27 May 2014).*

*Mr. Norman* discussed the teachers' qualifications as follows:

*"There are subject specialists in each grade, in each grade there is a teacher who specialises in particular subject area, our main subjects are Maths and English. If you do well in Maths you do well, if its English, our English is connected to the reading and comprehension and has a payoff, that is what you get inside the other Learning Areas because now I understand the question, now I know what the teacher wants, this question is, if I don't know what I am reading I have answered it wrong" (Mr. Norman, pers. comm, 26 June 2014).*

The findings revealed that teachers exercised their agency during teaching and learning in terms of imparting relevant knowledge to the learners. However, one of the teachers who participated in the study appeared not to be creative in ensuring that all learners were involved in the classroom activities. The textbook was the conditional mechanism in terms of the provision of equal opportunities to learn who come from diverse racial backgrounds. For instance, *Ms Petersen* (Grade 6 teacher) relied mainly on the textbook as a resource for the delivery of teaching and learning. The method of assessment was also mainly question and answers and these questions were taken directly from the textbook (teacher's guide). In other words, *Ms Petersen's* lessons were textbook-driven and she just utilised the information from the textbook without improving on it to assist learners to understand the subject matter. However, although she relied on textbook to impart knowledge to the learners, she seemed to be well-informed about the subject matter as she was able to provide learners with answers to the questions that they raised.

Further, during classroom instruction (Grade 6 Social Science and English lessons), I established that *Ms Petersen* concentrated only on learners who seemed to be actively participating during question and answer activities while disregarding those who were not paying attention in class. This indicated that all learners were given opportunities to participate in the lesson, however some of the learners did not take advantage of the opportunities presented to them. Learners who were actively taking part in class activities created more opportunities for themselves and others to understand the subject matter compared to those that contributed less during class discussions. Consider the following except from one of my classroom observations:

***Ms Petersen:** For today, Social Science, we are marking yesterday's work, we are marking activity 3.4., here you have to look at the photos and answer question around that. We did question 1, am I right? We went through question 2, is that correct?*

***Learners:** Yes*

***Ms Petersen:** Then question number 3, read question number 3, Linda, please*

***Linda is reading a passage from the textbook***

***Ms Petersen:** Ok Linda, which posts did you choose?*



**Lindah:** Mam, I chose number 5 and number 1

**Ms Petersen:** Ok, give me, read for me number 5, firstly you have to list 3 skills a lawyer needs to have to perform his job.

**Lindah:** Mam, I said he needs to work with people well, he needs to help with bail and justice.

**Ms Petersen:** Ok, with the lawyer, he obviously needs to stand up for people's rights etc., he must work with people well, he must know the law really well if he or she is going to represent you and obviously he needs to be really qualified legally to be able to do those things, I can't just say I have got excellent knowledge of the law, I read plenty novels and I watched lots of detectives stories on Television and I will be able to assist you, can I do that?

**Learners:** No

**Ms Petersen:** I can't, I don't have something that is very important, I don't have qualifications, ok, so a lawyer must have a good knowledge of the law and he has to have qualifications. Alright, how will he has gotten these skills?

**Karabo:** Mam, he, eeee, he should go to university.

**Ms Petersen:** He must go to university. And there is another very important thing lawyers must do (Ms Petersen, Classroom Observation: 16 April 2014).

The above interaction shows that *Ms Petersen's* application of teacher agency was mainly textbook driven. In other words, although she seemed knowledgeable about the subject matter, in some instances she was not innovative in making her lessons fascinating to her learners. Ms Petersen did not always use additional teaching aids such as pictures and video clips, she only used textbooks, chalk and chalkboard. As a result, not all her learners were taking part in the classroom discussion. The manner in which she exercised her agency in the delivery of curriculum was therefore not entirely enabling the provision of equal opportunities to learn to some pupils since not all learners were actively involved in the lesson. However, learners have the opportunity to make themselves actively involved instead of just being reactive.

In observing a Grade 7 Social Science class, I established that the teacher (*Ms Osteen*) made her lesson interesting to learners through her teaching strategies. For instance, although her lessons were guided by the prescribed textbooks, she also used a variety of resources such as video clips, photographs and additional handouts to make the lessons enthralling to all learners. As she explained the content of the lesson, some of the learners raised their hands

as an indication that they were inquisitive and eager to know more about the subject matter.

Study the following except from my classroom observation:

*I am showing you a couple of video clips, these are just small little fragments from either slide shows and photographs as you know during that time there were not many photographs available because we talking from year 1600 onwards as you know slavery went on for almost 300 years and it was due to the industrial revolution in Europe when machines started replacing human beings in factories and the factories could no longer keep up with the production of goods so they needed raw materials as you know Europe is tiny they don't have a lot of farming land and settlers from Europe went to the Americans to do mainly 4 types of farming and it was cotton farming, rice farming, tobacco farming and sugar farming and of course they needed a lot of labourers to do all of the hard work on these massive big farms. Before this as you can see the date there 1619 slavery had existed for years we even read about it in the bible when we read of the history of Egypt and the pyramids and when the Israelites were captured and they were used as slaves in Egypt to build the pyramids etcetera, so slavery has been going on for long but it became a very profitable business once manufacturing of goods started and people needed these raw materials and this is when it became almost costly, not almost but beyond costly its unimaginable, I'll answer your questions just now I want to show you the video clips now as you know I wanted you to write a diary entry as a slave as your first night on your owners farm so you can give a recount shortly of where you were taken, what happened, very shortly I don't want something longer than a page and a half, it must not be too long just shortly you were taken from there, the journey on the ship, the auction, the market and everything it will make more sense to you once I give you more of the information and I am sure you will get a better understanding once you see some of these video clips, now the first one is just a range of pictures that have been put together with some sound effects"(Ms Osteen, Classroom Observation: 27 May 2014).*

From the above interaction, it was evident that the teacher used additional materials to get the attention of all learners and to make the lesson stimulating so that all learners could participate meaningfully in the lesson. It also shows that she had enhanced the content of the lesson by providing learners with additional information so that all learners could gain a deeper understanding of the content of the lesson. This also encouraged effective learning for all learners and it stimulated learners and built their self-confidence. Learners themselves reported that the approaches used by the teacher helped them understand the central parts of the lessons; hence they enjoyed the lesson while they were learning at the same time.

While teachers applied their agency during classroom assessments, the findings revealed that teachers used an assessment approach that was not flexible enough to accommodate the diversity of learners' needs. Teachers did not differentiate assessment approaches according

to the different learning styles of the learners. They continuously assessed learners in the form of the question and answer method during teaching and learning. Although this form of assessment helped to monitor whether learners understood the subject matter, it did not support learners with different learning styles to disclose what they know. Teachers in this study used already prepared questions from the Social Science and English prescribed textbooks to assess learners. Every section of the Social Science and English textbooks had a unit of summary and assessment and the teachers used the questions from the assessment section to evaluate learners. Even most of the questions for learners' homework and classwork were taken from the textbooks. This implies that teachers utilised resources that were readily accessible as opposed to coming up with other assessment methods. The Department of Basic Education (2011) proposes that teachers should design differentiated assessment methods in order to be able to meet various ability levels of learners. However, during classroom observations, I established that the two teachers in this study were not assessing learners in line with the requirements of the curriculum. They did not design alternative methods of assessments for learners with different learning styles. This therefore means the teachers who participated in this study did not have various forms of assessments that are appropriate for learners' various abilities. This suggests that teachers' abilities to provide equal opportunities to learn were constrained by their lack of creativity in assessing learners.

The ability of the teachers to exercise agency to affect the provision of equal opportunities to learn in racially diverse classrooms was also constrained by their inability in some instances to connect subject matters covered within the curriculum with the local context. The subject matters that were imparted to learners maintained a focus on western knowledge discourses. I noted that, in all the ten lessons that I observed, there was no mention of indigenous knowledge. In one of the Grade 6 Social Science lessons, the lesson was on how the explorers from Europe came to southern Africa while in Grade 7 Social Science the lesson was on *"Africans being slaves in Europe"*. The highlight in these two lessons was on European / Portuguese people who came to the African countries and African people being slaves in Europe. During the presentations of these lessons learners were listening attentively and asking questions where they did not understand. The limitation of this lesson was that a new

subject content was used in lessons without some attempts to make sure that learners first understand the subject in relation to their lived experiences (Odora-Hoppers (2001). Formal education tends to ignore indigenous people's epistemologies, cultures, practices and lived experiences (Shava and Manyike, 2018). Modern schools barely mirror the cultural values and traditions of local indigenous communities. Indigenous knowledge should be brought into formal teaching and learning and be a critical section in every subject matter (Masuku van Damme and Neluvhalani, 2004). This indicates that learners' indigenous knowledge is actually overlooked, and the curriculum has the unintended consequence of perpetuating the privilege of western knowledge. This is not necessarily the fault of the school or the teachers. The school syllabus and textbooks are not decided upon by the school. If I were to teach this lesson, I would source literature that shows how people in some areas in Africa fought against slavery. This would show that Africans were not necessarily participating in the slavery system without any opposition.

In one of the Grade 6 Social Science lessons, the teacher used a map, a textbook and chalkboard as teaching resources. She showed learners a map and clarified that explorers came to South Africa from a southerly direction while pointing at the map. She also explained how the Renaissance era spread new ideas and knowledge throughout Europe. In addition, she stated that people from Europe started to travel around the world to acquire new knowledge about other countries and to establish new things that they will employ to change their lives. The teacher further explained to learners that the explorers brought new ideas from China and the Middle East about cultures, lifestyles, science and technology, which comprised of mathematics and counting systems as well as navigational instruments. She also demonstrated to learners how Portuguese people came to South Africa and how Christianity spread in the whole world. Moreover, the lesson illustrated that the Catholic Church in particular wanted the world to belong to one universal faith. The excerpt below described how the lesson unfolded:

***“Ms Petersen:*** And then you are going to turn to page number 65 in your Social Science textbooks. Alright we are starting the next section now, it is going to be our history, okay we are going to be looking at explorers from Europe, find Southern Africa, where is Europe.

***Kamo:*** Mam it's in the North.

**Ms Petersen:** *It is in the North ok, can we look at the globe, here is South Africa, Europe is here, can everybody see, it is the section here, so my finger is here on South Africa and here is Europe, if you travel from South Africa to go to Europe, you will go in which direction?*

**Pat:** *I will go North.*

**Ms Petersen:** *You will go North, and if the explorers were coming to South Africa which direction were they coming with. Okay the renaissance is regarded as one of the most interesting time period of the people, what started to happen during that time period was that people started to go out and decided to explore the world, by going out and exploring, what do you think happened? These people would they discover new things, new things that would change their lives forever..... Who was Leonardo Da Vinci, who was he Nomsa?*

**Nomsa:** *Mam I think he was an artist.*

**Ms Petersen:** *Yes, he was an artist, he was an adventurer, he was somebody who did wonderful things. Karabo what famous painting did he make?*

**Karabo:** *Mam is the Mona Lisa.*

**Ms Petersen:** *The Portuguese explored across the seas and we going to learn about some of them that went on something called the spice train, then we are going to look at the spread of the Christian religion in the world and how it actually spread out and how the people from non-Christian places became Christians because of the spread of Christianity, people arriving in their country teaching them about Christ, things like that (Ms Petersen, Classroom Observation: 15 May 2014).*

However, the subject on culture was not explored further due to time constraints. It would have been good to explore other cultural groups in order to enhance learners' understanding of diverse cultures as the class was comprised of racially diverse learners. However, this is a problem that is also embedded in the curriculum, and it cannot be entirely blamed on the teacher. Western education deprives the indigenous learners the opportunity of bringing into the classroom their own knowledge and education. This has contributed significantly to the loss of the value of indigenous knowledges as their unique heritage and loss of pride in their indigenous identity (Shava and Manyike, 2018). Formal education creates cultural separation rather than cultural engagement of African people with their own African origin (Nyamnjoh, 2012). Since there were no references to other cultures, it shows that this lesson can be construed to be teaching learners that Europeans (Portuguese) and Christianity are the main and significant themes of the lesson. This therefore suggests that the agency of the teacher to provide equal opportunities to learn might have been constrained by her inability to link the topics to the local context.

### **7.3.1 Workshops or in-service trainings on how to teach racially diverse classes**

Data revealed that teachers were not fully prepared to teach racially diverse learners. The study found that there were no workshops on how to teach racially diverse learners that teachers received from GDE. The only workshops that they got were on curriculum implementation without any reference to racially diverse classrooms. In addition, the workshops that teachers attended at the school level had nothing to do with teaching racial diverse learners. I gathered from the responses of teachers and the school principal that they viewed racial diversity as insignificant, hence they did not discuss it in their in-service training. The findings from my study concur with Mentz and van der Walt (2007) that teachers are less equipped to teach learners from diverse racial backgrounds. *Ms Petersen* illustrated it in this way:

*“Yes, we do, the Gauteng Department of Education, they will give us, they don’t really give us stuff often, emmm, like recently we got a roadshow, we got information at the school, I think this morning, we only find out and they are dealing with various topics but from the time I have been here, there has been nothing about a workshop on how to teach racially diverse learners, it’s only workshops on how to teach, teaching strategies, how to implement the curriculum, those kind of things but nothing on racially diverse learners” (Ms Petersen, pers. comm. 16 April 2014).*

### **7.4 Agency of learners**

It would be reasonable to make deductions that the learners had the minimum amount of agency in terms of teaching and learning and eventually contributing to the provision of equal opportunities. Primary agents are those people who are not able to apply much agency due to an involuntary disempowered position in society (Archer, 1995). Because learners are at the bottom of the ladder in the school, they are less prepared to challenge the structural and cultural organisation of the school. As already mentioned, the democratic government that was elected in 1994, brought about significant changes in the education system. Unlike in the previous government where learners were overlooked as part of education stakeholders,

presently due attention is given to learners' inputs and ideas. Legislative Acts such as SASA (Act No. 84 of 1996) have been approved to accommodate the needs and aspirations of learners. Section 10(3) of SASA (Act No. 84 of 1996) stipulates that public schools are permitted to establish a prefect structure<sup>12</sup> where needed. The functions of the structure consist of, amongst others:

- Promoting the culture of learning in the school,
- Supporting the principal, teachers and non-teaching staff in carrying out their duties, and
- Helping to decide in relation to any other events to be executed by the school.

In promoting the culture of learning at school, the prefect body provides support to learners who are struggling with particular learning areas and encourage learners to attend school regularly. The school prefects are also the custodians of the schools' ethos, values and motto (Boweni, 2005). In relation to the present study, data revealed that, although the school did have a prefect system in place, the system had less powers to enable or to constrain the provision of equal opportunities to learn but had powers to ensure that the school's culture is preserved. For instance, the study found that the roles and responsibilities of prefects encompassed enforcing school rules such as uniform tidiness, socks to be pulled up, shoes to be shiny, shirts tucked-in, hair short and tidy. The study found that when learners were not conducting themselves according to the school rules, the prefects kept records and reported to the deputy principal. If the behaviour continued, the detention policy was applied. This implied that learners were primary agents who had supported the culture of the school.

As mentioned above, the majority of the learners at the school were Black Africans but they come from diverse cultural groups and cultural practices. For instance, the findings showed that there were learners who spoke Sepedi, Sesotho, IsiXhosa, SiSwati, IsiNdebele, IsiZulu and Setswana and there were foreign learners who spoke their indigenous languages. In terms of interactions among learners, the findings showed that the interaction between learners of diverse race and ethnicity was not amicable. Learners who participated in this study reported

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<sup>12</sup>A prefect structure forms part of the management structure wherein a learner is expected to give guidance and direction to their fellow learners regarding school rules (du Toit, 1991).

that it was challenging to accommodate learners of other racial groups who did not understand their native language. In order to accommodate everyone in their interactions, local learners translated their indigenous language to English so that they understood one another. One of the learners, *Palesa (pseudonym)*, who participated in the study, indicated that, because cultures were different, they avoided doing certain things that will make foreign learners feel out of place. This situation somehow indicated that foreign learners were somehow disadvantaged by their inability to speak local languages. This was also the case even among diverse indigenous learners who were South Africans. Learners explained it in this way.

*“And sometimes it is because you know we come from different races and cultures and then we perform different rituals so it might be, for example in my culture we are not allowed to dance and in Salome’s culture they are allowed to dance, so now everybody can dance, so they are dancing and dancing and I cannot dance so it makes them feel embarrassed and they say no guys let’s stop because Salome can’t dance. So, sometimes that is quite difficult because we have to be at 50/50 chances because when she is here we cannot dance and when she is here we should try to do something that all of us can do” (Thabang, pers. comm, 27 May 2014).*

*“Yes, now we are on a mission of how to teach Salome Sesotho and Sepedi like she is learning things from another’s, you can see that sometimes we just carried on and she is like oh no I do not understand that, and we are like oh okay. Because, like as we translate we try to teach her a bit of this and a bit of that and if she wants to learn then she would ask “guys I don’t understand please help me” and we are like oh no this afternoon we are teaching Salome how to count in Sepedi and then she would teach us how to count in French so we exchange” (Palesa, pers. comm, 27 May 2014).*

These expressions above by learners indicated that they use what Archer (1995) called ‘internal conversation’ to try to accommodate one another. The fact that they translated from the native language to English shows that they wanted to unite with learners from other countries, and also locally due to the different languages and cultures. Learners’ agency in this regard was influenced by the school’s code of conduct which encouraged learners to relate well with one another in order to avoid detention. Although not very significant, learners’ PEPs in this context had an influence on the provision of equal opportunities to learn as they attempted to accommodate each other by interpreting their indigenous languages to learners who could not understand them so that they were able to understand and interact with one another. In other words, the demonstration of their agency had a positive effect on the structure and culture of the school.



## 7.5 Conclusion

According to Archer (2000a), whether at the level of school management, at the level of teachers or learners, the subject of human agency is continuously articulated through the interaction between people's emergent properties (PEPs) and that of structural and cultural emergent properties (SEP and CEPs). In relation to the provision of equal opportunities to learn in racially diverse classrooms, I established that structures such as the School Management Team and SGB had the ability to articulate their agency of PEPs. However, some people, such as the principal, within these structures had more influence than others. These people are called social actors and by virtue of their powerful positions or roles within the school and exercise agency more easily than the less powerful people (Archer, 1995).

The social actors in the context of the provision of basic education in racially diverse classrooms at the multiracial primary school included the school principal, deputy principal, HoDs and SGB members. From the findings, it was evident that the school management had powers to make decisions around the budget of the school, how the school money should be used, administration of school fees, exemption from paying school fees, school infrastructure and maintenance, curriculum related issues, school policies such as the language policy, religious policy, admission policy, the detention policy, the code of conduct of learners, the SWOT analysis and educational materials and other equipment to be used.

The Heads of Departments (HoDs) were responsible for giving direction to the teachers regarding the Learning Areas they teach, approaches to teaching and learning as well as learning activities. In other words, they provided curriculum leadership, hence could exercise much agency in this regard. Although it appeared from the data that the actions of teachers were significantly constrained by the departmental approach as effected by their HoDs, the findings revealed that teachers were able to exercise some agency in terms of how they actually ran their teaching and learning in racially diverse classrooms.

Data also revealed that teachers had the ability to express their agency during teaching and learning. However, their ability to exercise their agency in terms of the provision of equal opportunities to learn in racially diverse classes was restricted by their inability to connect the topics covered in the prescribed textbooks with the local context because the topics were not aligned to racially diverse backgrounds, that is, they focused on one or two racial groups with emphasis on western knowledge. In addition, I observed that one of the teachers was not innovative in making her lesson appealing to all her learners, as she used only the prescribed textbook as a teaching and learning resource. However, the other teacher was creative in making her lesson interesting to all learners as she used resources such as video clips and additional handouts to strengthen learners' understanding of the subject matter.

In terms of assessment, I established that teachers used the readily available questions from the prescribed textbooks without modifying them in line with learners' learning styles. I found that this did not enable the provision of equal opportunities to learn as they differ in terms of learning styles.

Further, data revealed that learners had little agency to influence the provision of equal opportunities to learn unless they (prefect structure) were given opportunities to support the school in terms of ensuring that learners obey school rules in order to maintain the school culture. The prefect structure was also found to play a critical role in assisting teachers and school principal with preparations for the upcoming events at the school. The agency of learners was also found to influence the school's code of conduct. In their interaction with learners from other countries, the study found that the local learners interpreted indigenous language to English in order assist the foreign learners understand the conversation and be one team. This suggested that the agency of learners had a beneficial influence in sustaining the structure and the culture of the school. In the next chapter, I will provide the conclusion and recommendations.

## **CHAPTER EIGHT: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

## 8.1 Overview

This study examined the effectiveness of teaching strategies employed at one multiracial primary school in Gauteng Province, South Africa. Specifically, the study looked at how teachers at the multiracial primary school provided racially diverse learners with equal opportunities to learn. The rationale for undertaking this study was to understand the role teachers played in the provision of equal opportunities to learn in a classroom containing learners who come from racially diverse backgrounds. The study provides insight on opportunities to learn using the school as a case study and the Social Realist and Critical Realist theories as lenses, but the findings are not necessarily generalisable.

In line with the South African national policies (the Constitution of RSA, 1996; SASA, 1996) which state that 'everyone has a right to basic education' and every public school in the country must open access to every learner irrespective of race or disability and that every learner should be accepted and not be unfairly discriminated against, it was apparent that the participating school had opened admission to all learners regardless of their race and culture. This can be described as providing learners with physical access to the school (Morrow, 2009). However, in this study, I wanted to uncover the ways in which the structure, culture and agents of the school produced enabling or constraining environments for the provision of equal opportunities to learn to learners from diverse racial backgrounds.

Literature reviewed in Chapter 1 indicated that one of the purposes of integration within South African schools was to ensure that all learners shared equal opportunities to receive a good quality education and schools provided equal access to all learners who lived within the school's locality irrespective of social class or colour (DoE, 2001). However, provision of equal opportunities to learn and quality education was still a challenge as the majority of educators received their teaching qualifications and entered into the teaching profession while education was still an integral part of the South African apartheid project. They were therefore equipped to teach learners from their particular racial group (Vandeyar, 2005; DoE, 2006). This created pressure on teachers as they had to cope with changing school customs

and racially diverse classrooms (Carrim 1998; Soudiem, 2004; Vandeyar, 2005). The present study then wanted to explore how teachers respond to the challenges posed by the new education policies that encourage racial assimilation in schools.

As already indicated in Chapter 3, I employed Bhaskar's Critical Realist ontology as a meta-theory reinforced by Margaret Archer's Social Realist analytical framework to help me understand the contributory mechanisms to the provision of equal opportunities to learn. I utilised Archer's Morphogenesis/Morphostatic Framework to attempt to understand how the school had undergone cultural and structural transformation or reproduction after democracy in terms of the provision of equal opportunities to learn irrespective of their racial backgrounds. I also used Archer's analytical dualism to scrutinise the interaction between 'parts' (structure and culture) and the 'people' (agency) in order to uncover the fundamental mechanisms that enable and restrict the provision of equal opportunities to learn in a class that has racially diverse learners.

## **8.2 The theoretical and analytical framework**

Margaret Archer's Social Realist theory, framed within the Critical Realist ontology, requires that the researcher should examine a deeper level of reality in order to discover the fundamental influences, practices, structures and mechanisms that produce incidents and help to enable or impede a specific occurrence. In the present study, the phenomenon under investigation was the effectiveness of teaching and learning strategies in racially diverse classrooms, specifically whether teachers provide or fail to provide equal opportunities to learn to learners who come from diverse racial backgrounds.

I used Archer's analytical dualism as lens to enable me to analyse the three domains of reality (structure, culture and agency) separately and understand the relationship in terms of the provision of equal opportunities to learn to all racially diverse learners. Each of the three layers has its own SEPs, CEPs and PEPs that might enable or inhibit the effectiveness of

teaching and learning strategies, thus supporting or constraining the provision of equal opportunities to learn for all learners (Archer, 1995 and 1996). Using analytical dualism has helped me to explore the interaction between the three layers and thus come to an understanding of what were the emergent properties or contributory mechanisms contributing to the enablement or constraining of effective teaching and learning, in particular, the provision of equal opportunities to learn in a class of racially diverse learners. Through this framework, it was possible to come to an understanding and describe the manner in which the relationship between the three layers of reality (structure, culture and agency) produced events and practices in a racially diverse classroom that support or constrain the provision of equal opportunities to learn for all learners. This also provides insights on the extent to which the school has changed (Morphogenesis) or has been reproduced (Morphostasis) in post-democracy in relation to the provision of equal opportunities to learn for all racially diverse learners.

### **8.3 The key findings**

In this study, I found that the enabling and constraining mechanisms pertaining to the provision of equal opportunities to learn in racially diverse classrooms were identified in the layers of structure, culture and agency. They were further identified during the classroom observations of Grades 6 and 7 Social Sciences and English lessons. The fundamental mechanisms were as follows:

#### **8.3.1 Structure**

The idea of ensuring that all learners have access to basic education without discrimination of any kind was discovered in this study as a critical mechanism that provided learners with physical access as the school had enough classrooms to accommodate them and the school had enough teaching and learning materials. However, in terms of access to knowledge (epistemological access), the study found that majority of learners were Black African learners who were taught by a majority of White teachers whose home language was Afrikaans. This

meant that there was cultural incongruity between learners and teachers and this was found to have negative implications on the provision of equal opportunities to learn as it affected learners' epistemological access. However, this does not necessarily mean Black learners must be taught by black teachers, but that it is good for teachers of other racial backgrounds to make efforts to understand the indigenous knowledge of learners and integrate it into teaching and learning processes to enhance opportunities to learn. Culturally responsive teaching is the first step for bridging the gap between home and school, and this requires teachers, even from a different race, to implement culturally responsive teaching based on learning and utilising knowledge of the cultures of the learners. It encourages learners to learn collaboratively, teach each other and be responsible for academic success of others (Erickson & Mohatt, 1982; Ladson-Billings, 1994).

Another structural mechanism that was identified was that of the school's Master Plan. The study established that the Master Plan was used to address challenges associated with numeracy, reading and other academic challenges. To address these challenges, the plan included the provision of remedial classes, the CAMI programme as well as the e-learning programme. This mechanism was found to enable the provision of equal opportunities to learn irrespective of their race, gender and socio-economic backgrounds because all learners had access to computer classes as well as teaching and learning materials. Those who were struggling academically were provided with an opportunity to attend remedial classes which took place after school.

Other structural systems included official education policies (Education Policy in British Tropical Africa of 1925, Christian National Education Policy of 1948, Bantu Education Act of 1953; SASA of 1996, GEPA of 1998 & GELAA of 2011) that drove the education system of the school prior to and after democracy. The study found that the policies that were used prior to democracy did not enable the provision of equal opportunities to learn as learners were categorised in terms of the race and language (English). The educational system by then was aimed at promoting separate development in favour of White learners learning in White schools that were well resourced.

The policies that drove the school after democracy were the GEPA of 1995, SASA policy of 1996, GSEP of 1998 and other school policies such as the admission, language and religious policies. The study established that the post-apartheid admission policy was developed to improve physical access to the school, and to provide equal treatment to diverse religious groups. The post-apartheid religious policy was found to have positive implications on the provision of knowledge in instances where a religion or religions are symbolised in a lesson. It implied that learners were exposed to new knowledge about various religions that were different from theirs and thus their epistemological access was increased.

The post-apartheid language policy (of English as the official Language of Teaching and Learning and Afrikaans as the second official language) was, however, found to have negative implications on the provision of equal opportunities to learn because the majority of learners were indigenous or non-English speakers and the school's medium of instruction was English and Afrikaans was a first additional language. This implied that first English language speakers and first Afrikaans language speakers were the ones who benefitted more in terms of epistemological access compared to indigenous learners of other languages. As already discussed, Martínez *et al.* (2010) found that learners get more opportunities to learn and enhanced epistemological access when they are taught in their home language than when they are taught in a foreign language. However, this is complex in the SA context as there are various racial groups who speak diverse languages. While there may be much agreement on theoretical issues but when it comes to LOLT, the practical solutions are mostly difficult and expensive to find and implement.

Another structural mechanism that was identified was that of the school's governance structure. The governance structure of the school was made up of, amongst others, the SMT, SGB, Finance Committee, Social Welfare team, and LTSM team and all four main racial groups (Black, White, Coloured and Indian) were represented in each of the teams. All these structures were available to make sure that there was smooth running of the school in terms of the availability of finance, LTSM, infrastructure and curriculum implementation. These structures were found to have powers that conditioned teachers to deliver curriculum and to



ensure that all learners received instruction. This implied that these structures were the mechanisms that existed at school to support teachers to provide equal opportunities to learn notwithstanding their racial or cultural backgrounds.

The school time-table was set in line with the policy handbook for educators commissioned by the Education Labour Relations Council (ELRC, 2003). The time allocation for Intermediate Phase (Grade 6) and Senior Phase (Grade 7) was 26 hours and 30 minutes per week, which meant that some of the periods were assigned 1 hour while others were allocated 30 minutes. Although the study found that the school had to follow the policy as a guideline in terms of allocating instructional time to Learning Areas, the school time-tabling was a structure that was found to affect the provision of equal opportunities to learn. Some of the teaching and learning periods were given 30 minutes, which was found to be insufficient for learners to engage with the subject matter. The findings showed that the majority of Grade 6 lessons were half an hour lessons and that they were divided into two sections, for instance, the first 15 minutes were allocated for marking the previous day's work, recitation of the poems or provision of explanations relating to the assignments expected from the learners or the upcoming examinations. The other 15 minutes was then assigned for teaching and learning. Since time was not adequate for all the activities that were planned, this did not support provision of sufficient opportunities to learn. The research by Carlos (1999) and Berliner (1990) on time-on-task showed that opportunities to learn and learners' performance were increased in the classes where educators maintain the continuity of the lesson. However, while half an hour lesson emerged to be inadequate for teaching and learning, the study found that the school had in place remedial lessons as the mechanisms in place to continue to provide learners with opportunities to learn and to assist learners who were not doing well academically. Moore, DeStefano and Gillies (2006) maintain that, without sufficient direct instructional time, no learning is possible. Learner achievement increases when learners are provided with more opportunities to learn, particularly when the allocated learning time is being used effectively (Benavot & Amadio, 2004). The school day and classroom activities must be arranged to make the best use of time on task (Stols, 2013).

### 8.3.2 Culture

A critical mechanism identified in the domain of culture was around teaching and learning strategies and resources used in racially diverse classes. The study found that one of the teacher's methods of teaching was mostly teacher-centred and learners did not contribute knowledge except when they answered questions asked by the teacher. This teacher relied mainly on the prescribed textbooks and question and answer methods were also used to assess learners' understanding of the subject matters. Her method of teaching was found to affect the provision of equal opportunities to learn as she appeared to be the only one who contributed knowledge while learners seemed to be the recipients. However, the other teacher's method of teaching was more learner-centred as her learners were actively involved in the lesson as she made use of visuals to make her lessons interesting. Her method was found to support the provision of equal opportunities to learn as learners actively participated in the classroom activities.

Code switching was a critical discourse that had the potential of affecting the provision of equal opportunities to learn for all learners in terms of understanding the content of the lesson. For instance, a Grade 7 Social Science and English teacher was an Afrikaans first language speaking person and she used code switching to explain a particular word, that is, she first used Afrikaans language "*uitlander*" to explain the word "*outlander*" in English. Although the word was written in English, she first translated it into Afrikaans before she could explain it in English. While code switching may be appropriate to enable learners to understand particular concepts, this study found that the teacher might have consciously translated the word into her native language, but this excluded the majority of the learners who were indigenous. This code switching did not necessarily benefit learners that did not understand Afrikaans. However, this was done only once during the lesson and it does not necessarily help draw any conclusion.

The curriculum was another domain of culture that was found to reinforce the provision of equal opportunities to learn to racially diverse learners. Data revealed that the curriculum in

the form of the content of some of the subject matters was appropriate for racially diverse classrooms. The study found that lessons about the '*history of slavery*' and '*yesterday's history, tomorrow's mystery*' were relevant to the classrooms serving learners who come from racially and culturally diverse backgrounds as slavery is a historical event that was a reality. It was crucial that the topic be taught in order to expose learners to the problems of racial inequality and why it was important to promote racial equality. The lesson benefited all learners in terms of knowledge and understanding of history and inequality between racial groups and how inequality needs to be corrected. However, the study found that teachers were not linking the topics that were based on a western context to the local context, thus limiting learners' understanding of the connection between western knowledge and indigenous knowledge.

Classroom management was found to be a mechanism that was used by the teachers as a way to ensure provision of equal opportunities to learn for all learners. The study found that disruptive learners did not pay attention to the content of the lesson and they also disturbed non-disruptive learners in terms of learning. However, the teacher managed them in order to ensure that all learners benefit from teaching and learning. Further, the teacher spent a lot of time controlling noise makers while at the same time teaching and learning had to take place. This affected teaching and learning time, thus constraining the provision of opportunities to learn. Movement of learners from one class to another to attend the next lesson was also found to reduce teaching and learning time and it ultimately affected the provision of opportunities to learn.

### **8.3.3 Agency**

As already pointed out, social actors are people who have powers by virtue of their powerful positions or roles to exercise their agency more easily than the less powerful people (Archer, 2000a). In the context of the delivery of basic education in racially diverse classrooms at the multiracial primary school under study, social actors comprised the SMT (school principal, deputy principal, HoDs) and SGB members. Data revealed that the school management had

powers to make decisions in relation to, amongst others, the budget of the school, how the school money should be used, administration of school fees, exemption from paying school fees, school infrastructure and maintenance, curriculum related issues, and school policies. This implied that they had powers to enable or constrain the provision of equal opportunities to learn. However, in this study they were found to enable the provision of equal opportunities to learn.

The agency of the Heads of Departments (HoDs) as part of the SMT structure was found in their possession of authority to guide teachers regarding the Learning Areas they teach, approaches to teaching and learning as well as learning activities that they have to carry out. This meant that they provided curriculum leadership, thus they could exercise much agency in this regard. Data showed that the actions of teachers in terms of the curriculum implementation were significantly controlled by the departmental approach as effected by their HoDs. However, the data also revealed that teachers were still able to exercise some agency in terms of how they actually ran their teaching and learning in racially diverse classrooms. For instance, teachers exercised their agency in terms of using additional teaching and learning materials (video clips, additional handout, among others) in order to make their lessons interesting. This was observed during a Grade 7 Social Science lesson where teaching and learning was done using video clips to reinforce learners' understanding of the subject matter. However, I also observed that one of the teachers was not innovative in making her lesson fascinating to all her learners as she used only the prescribed textbook as a teaching and learning resource and her lesson was mainly teacher-centred, thus learners were interacting less with the teacher. This lack of innovation on her part affected the provision of opportunities to learn as learners contributed less in terms of information sharing and were only receiving the information from the teacher.

Furthermore, data revealed that learners had little agency to influence the provision of equal opportunities to learn. Only the prefect structure exercised their agency in terms of ensuring that learners conform to school rules and provided support to teachers and school principal

with regard to preparations of the school events and other activities. This implied that the prefect structure had powers to ensure that the culture of the school was maintained.

#### **8.4 Contributions to knowledge**

This study contributes to the body of literature on the effectiveness of teaching and learning strategies that are employed in racially diverse classrooms. I used Margaret Archer's Social Realist Morphogenesis/Morphostasis approach (1995) as a theoretical framework in this research to outline structural, cultural and agential power/knowledge relations and their influence on the provision of equal opportunities to learn in racially diverse classrooms prior to and after democracy in South Africa. The Morphogenesis/Morphostatic framework helped me to explore the school transformation or reproduction after democracy in terms of the provision of equal opportunities to learn to racially diverse learners. The study highlighted the underlying mechanisms that contributed to or constrained the provision of equal opportunities to learn. It showed that, while some school policies such as admission and religious policies supported the provision of equal access to school and treatment of diverse religions respectively, the language policy of the school did not cater for indigenous languages despite the majority of learners at the school being Black Africans who spoke a number of different languages. This was found to affect the provision of equal opportunities as it limited their epistemological access.

While the school had increased admission to learners from diverse racial and cultural backgrounds and appointed teachers from various racial groups, the study revealed that the school staff was still predominantly White, while learner enrolment was mainly Black Africans. This implied that the culture of the school in relation to the provision of opportunities to learn has not significantly changed (Morphostasis) since the inception of the school. However, there is significant change on learner composition. This indicated that some of the previous cultural policies that were prevalent during the apartheid era still had an influence on the school in the post-apartheid era.

The type of curriculum taught is not the decision of the school. To a large extent, the Department of Basic Education (DBE) prescribes what learners must be taught. The study has provided in-depth perspective on classroom teaching and learning processes and their effects on learners who come from diverse racial backgrounds. The knowledge generated from this study confirms that teachers were not prepared to teach racially diverse classes. Their teaching practice was mainly guided by the curriculum. The information from the prescribed textbooks was provided to learners without linking it to learners' prior or indigenous knowledge and local context. The findings are pertinent to curriculum developers and policymakers to ensure that the teaching about western knowledge contained in the curriculum is integrated with the indigenous knowledge to enable learners to have a broader understanding of the subject matters.

The study also found that the instructional time for school subjects was guided by policy (ELRC, 2003). The policy on instructional time for school subjects outlines how much time should be allocated to all primary school Learning Areas. Teachers in this study perceived teaching and learning time as sufficient for classroom activities. However, the observations made revealed that the time allocated for some of the lessons was not adequate and that time was also wasted when learners moved from one class to another to attend other Learning Areas and this did not enable the provision of adequate opportunities to learn for the learners. Learners need to be allocated enough time to learn in order to improve their knowledge (Carroll, 1989).

### **8.5 Limitations of the study**

This study was conducted in one multiracial primary school located in the province of Gauteng. Due to time constraints, it was not possible to investigate the effectiveness of teaching strategies in all the grades and classes at the school. Therefore, this study was limited to only Grade 6 and 7 classes. These classes were selected due to the fact that they were Senior Phase classes at the primary school level and I presumed that learners would have gathered information from all the previous grades to demonstrate sufficient knowledge to

proceed to the secondary school. I chose Social Science because I am familiar with the subject as I used to teach it when I was a primary school teacher. The reason why I chose English was because it is the LOLT at this school and it is an international language. Due to the fact that the study did not look at the Foundation (Grades R to 3) and other Intermediate Phase classes (Grades 4 and 5) and other Learning areas, this created a limitation as it did not explore what goes on in these classes in relation to the provision of equal opportunities to learn.

Interviews with learners were done after lessons so that I did not interfere with teachers' contact time with learners. However, in some instances, some of the learners were expected to participate in extra-mural activities and this marked a limitation to this study as some of these learners would be called to attend the activities without having finished with the interview. School transport was another impediment to this study as the transport drivers would be calling the learners while the interviews with some of the learners were still ongoing. This happened because other teachers at the school and the transport drivers of the learners were not informed about the time scheduled for the learners to participate in the interview.

Another limitation of the study was that the study involved only the school principal and two Senior Phase teachers who teach Social Sciences and English and not all the teachers in this learning phase. However, the data that emerged also indicated the role played by the other SMT teams such as the HoDs, the deputy principals, SGB and other governance structures of the school as expounded by the school principal during the interview. Because the main data collection method of the study was classroom observations to examine whether teachers provided or failed to provide racially diverse learners with equal opportunities to learn and due to time constraints, these governance structures were not involved in the study and this was a study limitation.

Since this study was qualitative in nature and was a case study of one multiracial primary school, it does not offer generalisation to other contexts. This was a limitation of the study. However, the findings could be of wider significance than this case study as inferences can be made from it on similar schools. As the study was guided by the Social Realist theory of

Margaret Archer (1995), supported by Bhaskar's (1998) Critical Realist principles of the structure, culture and agency, I endeavoured to discover the mechanisms that enable and/or constrain the provision of equal opportunities to learn in racially diverse classes. The findings of this study could be applicable outside *Arabia Primary School* because the identified mechanisms might also be observable in different contexts (schools) that serve learners who come from diverse racial backgrounds.

There were difficulties in the analysis of data from various sources. Since I was utilising Margaret Archer's Social Realist methodology of analytical dualism, I found it difficult to differentiate between what Archer called 'parts' (structure and culture) from people (agency). Some of the data overlaps among the three domains of structure, culture and agency and I found it difficult to determine whether to assign noticeable underlying mechanisms to either structure, culture or agency.

## **8.6 Conclusion**

As I have already indicated, this study was a case study of a specific multiracial primary school. Although the findings of case studies are normally not generalizable to other contexts, I would argue that the findings of this study can be extrapolated to other schools that serve learners who come from diverse racial backgrounds as these schools might be experiencing similar underlying mechanisms that enable and constrain the provision of equal opportunities to learn.

One central lesson that I have learned from this study was that the education transformation policies (SASA, 1996; DoE, 2001) put more emphasis on equality in terms of physical access to basic education. The policies stress that every public school in South Africa must admit learners regardless of their race or disability. At this school, the school admitted learners of mixed racial groups, though the majority of the learners were Black Africans from different ethnic backgrounds. This showed that the school's admission system was in line with the



education transformation policies. The admission policy of the school indicated that no learner could be denied admission due to inability to pay school fees. This revealed that these policies were the mechanisms that enabled learners to access the school as an education facility.

However, with regard to epistemological access, that is how teachers implement curriculum in a class containing learners who come from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds, and whether or not they provide racially diverse learners with equal opportunities to learn, these policies were not clear. The study revealed that teachers were guided by the CAPS documents with regard to knowledge impartation. Although this curriculum is relevant for racially diverse classrooms, teachers in this study were unable to integrate the subject matters with learners' indigenous knowledge to link it to the learners' contexts. This was found to limit learners' access to knowledge.

As indicated in Chapter 3 of this thesis, this study relied on Social Realist theory, specifically Archer's Morphogenesis/Morphostasis approach, which refers to change and continuity. The rationale for using this approach was to have an in-depth understanding of whether or not the school has changed after democracy in terms of structure, culture and agency. The findings of the study revealed that the school's structure in terms of learner enrolment has changed because of the education transformation policies which endorsed racial integration in public schools and permit learners to attend schools of their choice. The present school has opened physical access to learners from diverse racial backgrounds, but most of them were Black African learners. However, the majority of teachers were predominantly White. This showed the Morphogenesis in terms of learner enrolment and Morphostasis in terms of staff composition.

Morphogenesis (change) had also been identified in the post-apartheid era religious policy of the school as it now caters for diverse religions. However, in terms of the language policy (the LOLT) the school had not changed as it still continues to teach learners in English and uses

Afrikaans as first additional language despite the fact that most of the learners are Black Africans who have their own indigenous languages but none of the languages were represented in the school. This study therefore concludes that the culture of the school had been reproduced (Morphostasis) in the post-apartheid era as there was limited diversity in both teaching staff complement and the official languages used for teaching and learning in the school. However, significant changes have been noted in learner enrolment, as the majority of learners are of Black African background.

## **8.7 Recommendations**

The main research question addressed by this study was: what kinds of teaching strategies do teachers employ in racially diverse classrooms? The sub-questions I asked were:

- What kinds of teaching strategies do teachers use in Social Science and English in the Grade 6 and 7 classes to promote equal OTL?
- What kinds of teaching and learning resources do teachers use in Social Science and English in the Grade 6 and 7 classes to provide learners with equal OTL?
- How effective are these teaching strategies and resources in helping learners from diverse racial backgrounds to understand the content of the lessons?

Specifically, the study wanted to examine whether teachers provide or fail to provide equal opportunities to learn in racially diverse classrooms. It further intended to uncover the structural, cultural and agential factors that enable and/or constrain the provision of equal opportunities to learn in a classroom that was comprised of learners who come from racially diverse backgrounds. Through the use of Bhaskar's Critical Realist ontological position and Margaret Archer's Social Realist framework, I was able to discover some of the causal mechanisms that generate particular incidents, activities, practices and strategies adopted in the implementation of the curriculum in racially diverse classrooms that have implications for the provision of equal opportunities to learn. This led me to make the following recommendations:

- i. *At the structural domain*, the study found that, through the post-apartheid policies that drove the transformation of education in the country, the school had opened physical access to learners from diverse racial backgrounds to be admitted without unfair discrimination on the basis of race, culture or socio-economic backgrounds. It was found that majority of learners at this school were Black Africans but that the school also included international learners and that the language that was used to cater for all learners was English, with Afrikaans as the first additional language. The language policy should be reviewed to consider the inclusion of indigenous African languages as first additional languages as the school served a majority of Black African learners.

The policy on instructional time for school subjects that guide schools in terms of drawing school time-tables should be re-examined in order to provide teachers and learners with enough teaching and learning time with the intention of supporting the provision of opportunities to learn.

- ii. In the *cultural domain*, the study found that the question and answer approach that teachers employed as a teaching strategy did not help all learners to participate in the classroom activities. I therefore recommend that teachers should explore and employ various teaching and learning strategies in order to involve all learners during lessons.

The literature reveals that, after the transformation of education in the country in the post-apartheid era, teachers were not prepared to teach racially diverse classes (Vandeyar, 2005; DoE, 2006). Similarly, this study confirms that teachers who participated in this study did not receive training in relation to teaching a classroom containing learners who come from diverse racial backgrounds. There is a need to consider workshopping teachers about how to teach learners from diverse racial backgrounds in order to enable the provision of equal opportunities to learn.

It was also found in this study that disruptive learners hampered the teaching and learning time as the teachers spent too much time controlling them. This was also found to affect the provision of opportunities to learn.

Movement from one class to another in order to attend the next lesson was found to also impede teaching and learning time in this study. This also needs to be reviewed in order to enable the provision of opportunities to learn.

- iii. *At the domain of agency*, the study found that HoDs had powers to guide teachers in terms of curriculum implementation because they provide them with support regarding to the Learning Areas they teach. It was also found that teachers had the agency to decide how they taught and to introduce diverse and innovative ways for teaching and learning. However, it was revealed that teachers were not innovative with regard to classroom assessments, that is, they relied on the readily available assessment information (questions) in the prescribed textbook without amending it to learners' abilities to learn. It is critical for HoDs, as curriculum leaders, to train teachers on how to employ different assessment activities according to learners' abilities.

## **8.8 Suggestions for further research**

In the paragraphs that follows, I suggest possible areas for further research that could provide deeper understanding into the issues that were not explored in my study:

- What are teachers' understandings of provision of opportunities to learn in racially diverse classes?
- What are the perceived challenges related to the provision of opportunities to learn in a racially and culturally diverse schools?
- How do political structures and changes influence effective teaching and learning in racially diverse classrooms?
- How does racial diversity of learners' influence classroom teaching and learning?

I also make a methodological suggestion that, by utilising the methodology similar to the one used in my study, research could be conducted into curriculum leaders' (HoDs) understanding and perceptions of the relationship between structure, culture and agency in relation to the provision of opportunities to learn in racially diverse class.

Using a larger sample size other than the one used in this study is recommended. Teachers from Foundation Phase and parents in the form of the School Governing Body could be sampled to have a complete picture of how and whether or not the school provided racially diverse learners with equal opportunities to learn.

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## **APPENDICES**

## Appendix 1: Research Ethics Clearance Certificate




### Research Ethics Clearance Certificate

This is to certify that the application for ethical clearance submitted by

**S Nenweli [49207733]**

for a D Ed study entitled

**Mirrors and Windows: a case study of the effectiveness of teaching strategies employed in racially diverse classrooms in South Africa**  
has met the ethical requirements as specified by the University of South Africa College of Education Research Ethics Committee. This certificate is valid for two years from the date of issue.



Prof CS le Roux  
CEDU REC (Chairperson)

[lrouxcs@unisa.ac.za](mailto:lrouxcs@unisa.ac.za)

Reference number: 2013 OCT/49207733/CSLR

22 October 2013

**Appendix 2: Request for permission to conduct research**

P O Box 188

Celtis Ridge

0130

13/01/2014

Director: Education Research and Knowledge Management

Gauteng Department of Education

P O Box 7710

Johannesburg

2001

Dear Sir/Madam

**REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH PROJECT AT ARABIA PRIMARY SCHOOL**

I am a D Ed. student in Curriculum Studies at the University of South Africa and I am doing research on schools in the Gauteng Province. I hereby request permission to conduct my research on the topic: **“Mirrors and Windows: a case study of the effectiveness of teaching strategies employed in racially diverse classrooms at one primary school in the Gauteng Province in South Africa”** in Arabia Primary School. The aim of my research is to find out how teachers provide equal opportunities to learn in a class of racially diverse learners. Specifically, the study examines the effectiveness of teaching strategies that teachers use to distribute equal learning opportunities in racially diverse classes.

The research project will be carried out for a period of six weeks in the school. Two Grades 6 and 7 teachers (Social Science and English) and sixteen learners (eight Grade 6 and eight

Grade 7 learners) from racially diverse backgrounds will be expected to participate in a 45 minute to 1-hour interview which will be tape-recorded. Interviews will be conducted after school as I do not want to interfere with teachers' contact hours with learners. Learners will be interviewed individually for a period of 45 minutes to 1 hour to find out about how they learn in a racially diverse class.

Classroom observations will also be done five times with each teacher. The teachers will be expected to teach and learners will be expected to learn while I will be observing to obtain data about how teachers provide equal opportunities to learn in a racially diverse class and how they involve learners in the classroom activities. Documents such as teachers' lesson plans/workbooks, hand-outs from teachers' workshops or cluster meetings, *etc.*, will be analysed to explore how the school help teachers to provide high quality teaching and learning in racially diverse classrooms. The information collected from the interviews, classroom observations and documents will highly be confidential and will only be used for the purpose of my study.

The school's participation in this research project is voluntary and confidential and should the school be willing to participate in this study, none of the information obtained will be disseminated to the public in a manner that identifies the school and teachers as well as learners. Should any academic publication be made, pseudonyms will be used for the school, the staff and learners in place of the actual names. Participants are free to withdraw from the study if they feel they do not want to continue.

The role of participants is explained in this letter and if the school is permitted to participate in the study please sign this letter as a declaration of your consent. This would mean the school participates in this project willingly and that it may withdraw from the research project at any time.

District Director's signature..... Date.....

Researcher's signature..... Date.....

Yours faithfully

Mrs Sekinah Nenweli

[snenweli@gpl.gov.za](mailto:snenweli@gpl.gov.za) / [snenweli@yahoo.com](mailto:snenweli@yahoo.com)

Cell No: 083 490 9341 / 011 498 63323



### Appendix 3: Permission letter from Gauteng Department of Education



## GAUTENG PROVINCE

Department: Education  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

For administrative use:  
Reference no. D2014/331

### GDE AMENDED RESEARCH APPROVAL LETTER

Date:	24 January 2014
Validity of Research Approval:	10 February to 3 October 2014
Previous GDE Research Approval letter reference number	D2014/013 dated 11 April 2014
Name of Researcher:	Nenweli M.S.
Address of Researcher:	P.O. Box 188
	Celtis Ridge
	Centurion
	Pretoria
	0130
Telephone Number:	011 498 6323 / 083 490 9341
Fax Number:	011 498 6306
Email address:	nenweli@gpl.gov.za / nenweli@yahoo.com
Research Topic:	Mirrors and Windows: Effectiveness of teaching strategies employed in racially diverse classrooms in South Africa
Number and type of schools:	ONE Primary School
District/s/HO	Tshwane South

#### Re: Approval in Respect of Request to Conduct Research

*Approved  
2014/01/27*

This letter serves to indicate that approval is hereby granted to the above-mentioned researcher to proceed with research in respect of the study indicated above. The onus rests with the researcher to negotiate appropriate and relevant time schedules with the school/s and/or offices involved to conduct the research. A separate copy of this letter must be presented to both the School (both Principal and SGB) and the District/Head Office Senior

1

*Making education a societal priority*

#### Office of the Director: Knowledge Management and Research

9<sup>th</sup> Floor, 111 Commissioner Street, Johannesburg, 2001  
P.O. Box 7710, Johannesburg, 2000 Tel: (011) 355 0606  
Email: David.Makhado@gauteng.gov.za  
Website: www.education.gpg.gov.za

Manager confirming that permission has been granted for the research to be conducted.

The following conditions apply to GDE research. The researcher may proceed with the above study subject to the conditions listed below being met. Approval may be withdrawn should any of the conditions listed below be flouted:

1. The District/Head Office Senior Manager/s concerned must be presented with a copy of this letter that would indicate that the said researcher/s has/have been granted permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the research study.
2. The District/Head Office Senior Manager/s must be approached separately, and in writing, for permission to involve District/Head Office Officials in the project.
3. A copy of this letter must be forwarded to the school principal and the chairperson of the School Governing Body (SGB) that would indicate that the researcher/s have been granted permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the research study.
4. A letter / document that outlines the purpose of the research and the anticipated outcomes of such research must be made available to the principals, SGBs and District/Head Office Senior Managers of the schools and districts/offices concerned, respectively.
5. The Researcher will make every effort obtain the goodwill and co-operation of all the GDE officials, principals, and chairpersons of the SGBs, teachers and learners involved. Persons who offer their co-operation will not receive additional remuneration from the Department while those that opt not to participate will not be penalised in any way.
6. Research may only be conducted after school hours so that the normal school programme is not interrupted. The Principal (if at a school) and/or Director (if at a district/head office) must be consulted about an appropriate time when the researcher/s may carry out their research at the sites that they manage.
7. Research may only commence from the second week of February and must be concluded before the beginning of the last quarter of the academic year. If incomplete, an amended Research Approval letter may be requested to conduct research in the following year.
8. Items 6 and 7 will not apply to any research effort being undertaken on behalf of the GDE. Such research will have been commissioned and be paid for by the Gauteng Department of Education. It is the researcher's responsibility to obtain written parental consent of all learners that are expected to participate in the study.
9. The researcher is responsible for supplying and utilising his/her own research resources, such as stationery, photocopies, transport, faxes and telephones and should not depend on the goodwill of the institutions and/or the offices visited for supplying such resources.
10. The names of the GDE officials, schools, principals, parents, teachers and learners that participate in the study may not appear in the research report without the written consent of each of these individuals and/or organisations.
11. On completion of the study the researcher/s must supply the Director: Knowledge Management & Research with one Hard Cover bound and an electronic copy of the research.
12. The researcher may be expected to provide short presentations on the purpose, findings and recommendations of his/her research to both GDE officials and the schools concerned.
13. Should the researcher have been involved with research at a school and/or a district/head office level, the Director concerned must also be supplied with a brief summary of the purpose, findings and recommendations of the research study.

The Gauteng Department of Education wishes you well in this important undertaking and looks forward to examining the findings of your research study.

Kind regards



Dr David Makhado  
Director: Education Research and Knowledge Management

DATE: 2014/01/27

Making education a societal priority

2

**Office of the Director: Knowledge Management and Research**

9<sup>th</sup> Floor, 111 Commissioner Street, Johannesburg, 2001  
P.O. Box 7710, Johannesburg, 2000 Tel: (011) 355 0506  
Email: David.Makhado@gauteng.gov.za  
Website: www.education.gpg.gov.za

#### **Appendix 4: Consent letter from the school principal**

P O Box 188

Celtis Ridge

0130

08/04/2014

The Principal

Arabia Primary School

Pretoria

0001

Dear Sir/Madam

#### **REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH PROJECT AT ARABIA PRIMARY SCHOOL**

I am a D Ed. student in Curriculum Studies at the University of South Africa and I am doing research on schools in the Gauteng Province. I hereby request permission to conduct my research on the topic: **“Mirrors and Windows: a case study of the effectiveness of teaching strategies employed in racially diverse classrooms at one primary school in the Gauteng Province in South Africa”** in your school. The aim of my research is to find out how teachers provide equal opportunities to learn in a class of racially diverse learners. Specifically, the study examines the effectiveness of teaching strategies that teachers use to distribute equal learning opportunities in racially diverse classes.

The research project will be carried out for a period of six weeks in your school. Two Grades 6 and 7 teachers (Social Science and English) and sixteen learners (eight from Grade 6 and eight from Grade 7) from racially diverse backgrounds will be expected to participate in a 45 minute to 1-hour interview which will be tape-recorded. Interviews will be conducted during after school as I do not want to interfere with teachers' contact hours with learners. Each teacher will be interviewed three times as a follow-up to the lessons presented. Learners will be interviewed individually for a period of 45 minutes to 1 hour to find out about how they learn in a racially diverse class.

Classroom observations will also be done five times with each teacher. The teachers will be expected to teach and learners will be expected to learn while I will be observing to obtain data about how teachers provide equal opportunities to learn in a racially diverse class and how they involve learners in the classroom activities. Documents such as teachers' lesson plans/workbooks, hand-outs from teachers' workshops or cluster meetings, etc., will be analysed to explore how the school help teachers to provide high quality teaching and learning in racially diverse classrooms. The information collected from the interviews, classroom observations and documents will highly be confidential and will only be used for the purpose of my study.

Your school's participation in this research project is voluntary and confidential and should your school be willing to participate in this study, none of the information obtained will be disseminated to the public in a manner that identifies your school and your teachers and learners. Should any academic publication be made, pseudonyms will be used for the school, the staff and learners in place of the actual names. Participants are free to withdraw from the study if they feel they do not want to continue.

Detail in this letter is a document explaining the role of participants in this study, and if your school is willing to participate please sign this letter as a declaration of your consent. This would mean your school participates in this project willingly and that the school may withdraw from the research project at any time.

Principal's signature..... Date.....

Researcher's signature..... Date.....

Yours faithfully

Mrs Sekinah Nenweli

[snenweli@gpl.gov.za](mailto:snenweli@gpl.gov.za) / [snenweli@yahoo.com](mailto:snenweli@yahoo.com)

Cell. No: 083 490 9341 / 011 498 63323

## **Appendix 5: Consent letter from the first teacher**

P O Box 188

Celtis Ridge

0130

08/04/2014

Dear participant

You are invited to participate in a research project aimed at investigating how teachers provide equal opportunities to learn in racially diverse classes. The aim of this study is finding out the manner in which teachers deliver equal learning opportunities to learners who come from diverse racial backgrounds. The results from this project will provide conceptual and empirical foundations for understanding how educators provide or fail to provide equal opportunities to learn in racially diverse classrooms in a country recently emerging from apartheid. Your input and feedback are therefore critical to the study.

Your participation in this research project will include audio-taped interviews and video-taped classroom observations. Your participation is voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study if you feel you want to discontinue. You will not be asked to reveal any information that will allow your identity to be recognized, unless you are willing to be contacted for individual follow up interviews. Should you declare yourself willing to participate in an individual interview, confidentiality will be guaranteed and you may decide to withdraw at any stage should you wish not to continue with an interview. The duration of the interview will take about 45 minutes to 1 hour.

Accompanying this letter is a document explaining that the participants will be interviewed and also be observed during lesson presentation.

If you are willing to participate in this study, please sign this letter as a declaration of your consent, i.e., that you participate in this project willingly and that you understand that you may withdraw from the research project at any time. Participation in this phase of the project

does not obligate you to participate in follow up individual interviews, however, should you decide to participate in follow- up interviews your participation is still voluntary and you may withdraw at any time.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Sekinah Nenweli

[snenweli@gpl.gov.za](mailto:snenweli@gpl.gov.za) / [snenweli@yahoo.com](mailto:snenweli@yahoo.com)

Cell. No: 083 490 9341 / 011 498 6323

#### CONSENT

I agree to participate in the research entitled **“Mirrors and Windows: a case study of the effectiveness of teaching strategies employed in racially diverse classrooms at one primary school in the Gauteng Province in South Africa”** as described in the accompanying letter.

Name.....

Signature.....

Date.....

## **Appendix 6: Consent letter from the second teacher**

P O Box 188

Celtis Ridge

0130

08/04/2014

Dear participant

You are invited to participate in a research project aimed at investigating how teachers provide equal opportunities to learn in racially diverse classes. The aim of this study is finding out the manner in which teachers deliver equal learning opportunities to learners who come from diverse racial backgrounds. The results from this project will provide conceptual and empirical foundations for understanding how educators provide or fail to provide equal opportunities to learn in racially diverse classrooms in a country recently emerging from apartheid. Your input and feedback are therefore critical to the study.

Your participation in this research project will include audio-taped interviews and video-taped classroom observations. Your participation is voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study if you feel you want to discontinue. You will not be asked to reveal any information that will allow your identity to be recognized, unless you are willing to be contacted for individual follow up interviews. Should you declare yourself willing to participate in an individual interview, confidentiality will be guaranteed and you may decide to withdraw at any stage should you wish not to continue with an interview. The duration of the interview will take about 45 minutes to 1 hour.

Accompanying this letter is a document explaining that the participants will be interviewed and also be observed during lesson presentation.



If you are willing to participate in this study, please sign this letter as a declaration of your consent, i.e., that you participate in this project willingly and that you understand that you may withdraw from the research project at any time. Participation in this phase of the project does not obligate you to participate in follow up individual interviews, however, should you decide to participate in follow- up interviews your participation is still voluntary and you may withdraw at any time.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Sekinah Nenweli

[snenweli@gpl.gov.za](mailto:snenweli@gpl.gov.za) / [snenweli@yahoo.com](mailto:snenweli@yahoo.com)

Cell. No: 083 490 9341 / 011 498 6323

#### CONSENT

I agree to participate in the research entitled **“Mirrors and Windows: a case study of the effectiveness of teaching strategies employed in racially diverse classrooms at one primary school in the Gauteng Province in South Africa”** as described in the accompanying letter.

Name.....

Signature.....

Date.....

## **Appendix 7: Consent letter from learner's parent**

P O Box 188

Celtis Ridge

0130

08/04/2014

Dear Parent / Guardian

### **REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO INVOLVE LEARNERS IN A RESEARCH PROJECT**

I am a D Ed., student in Curriculum Studies at the University of South Africa, involved in the research in one primary school in the Gauteng Province. The aim of my research is to find out how teachers distribute equal opportunities to learn in a class of racially diverse learners.

In order to collect valid information, I need to interview some learners who are from diverse racial backgrounds to find out how they learn in a racially diverse class.

Through this letter I kindly request you to grant permission for your child to participate in this study. Your child's participation in this study is voluntary and he or she is free to withdraw from the study if he or she feels that he or she does not want to continue. Confidentiality will be guaranteed as none of the information obtained will be given to anybody.

Your child will be expected to do the following only:

- Participate in a 45 minute to 1-hour interview.
- The interview will take place after school in a classroom.
- The interview will be conducted in English.
- The interview will be tape-recorded.

- Learners will be interviewed individually.
- Learners have the right to remain anonymous.
- Learners have the right to withdraw from the interview at any time if they are not comfortable.

If you grant permission for your child to participate in this study please sign this letter as a declaration of your consent. This would mean your child participates in this study with your consent.

Name of the child.....

Parent's signature..... Date.....

Researcher's signature..... Date.....

Yours faithfully

Mrs Sekinah Nenweli

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## **Appendix 8: Consent letter from a learner**

P O Box 188

Celtis Ridge

0130

08/04/2014

Learner

Arabia Primary School

Pretoria

0001

Dear Learner

### **REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH PROJECT**

I am a D Ed. student in Curriculum Studies at the University of South Africa, involved in the research in one primary school in the Gauteng Province. The aim of my research is to find out how teachers distribute equal opportunities to learn in a class of racially diverse learners.

In order to collect valid information, I need to interview some learners who are from diverse racial backgrounds to find out how they learn in a racially diverse class.

Through this letter I kindly request you to participate in the study. Your participation in this study is voluntary and should you feel uncomfortable you are free to withdraw from the study. Confidentiality will be guaranteed as none of the information obtained will be given to anybody.

You parents have consented to your involvement in the study but you also have the right to choose whether to participate or not. Therefore, if you consent to participate in the study, you will be expected to do the following only:

- Participate in a 45 minute to 1-hour interview.
- The interview will take place after school in a classroom.
- The interview will be conducted in English.
- The interview will be tape-recorded.
- You will be interviewed individually.
- You have the right to remain anonymous.
- You have the right to withdraw from the interview at any time if they are not comfortable.

If you grant permission to participate in this study please sign this letter as a declaration of your consent. This would mean you agree to participate in this study.

Name of the learner.....

Learner's signature..... Date.....

Researcher's signature..... Date.....

Yours faithfully

Mrs Sekinah Nenweli

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## **Appendix 9: Interview schedule for school principal**

### **Semi-structured interview with school principal**

#### **1. Background of the school**

##### **Prior to 1994**

- Tell me about the origins of the school {probes: How and when did this school start operating}
- With how many classrooms?
- With how many teachers? (How many males and females were there?) (How many Black African, Coloured, White, and Indian teachers were there?)
- With how many learners (How many boys and girls were there?) (How many Black African, Coloured, White and Indian learners were there at the start of the school?)
- How much was the school fee at the establishment of the school?
- Were all learners managing to pay? If not, what were you doing with those who were unable to pay?
- What kind of the policy was driving the education system prior to 1994? (What influence did it have on the student and staff composition?)
- What were the implications of these policies and curriculum on the provision of equal opportunities to learn?

##### **After 1994**

- How many staff members does the school have currently? (How many males and how many females?)
- How many Black African, Coloured, White, and Indian teachers does the school have currently?
- How many learners does the school have currently? (How many boys and how many girls?)
- How many Black African, Coloured, White and Indian learners does the school have currently? (their age)

- Do you have an idea where these learners come from, i.e., their socio-economic background? Where do they stay and how do they come to school?
- How much is the school fee this year? And how do they pay, e.g., monthly, quarterly or annually?
- Are all learners able to pay school fee? If not, what do you do with those learners who are unable to pay? Do you remove them from the classroom / school premises?
- How often do teachers meet? (as whole school staff at school, [what do they talk about at these meetings – collect samples of agenda of 2 or 3 recent meetings and see if diversity issues are discussed]
- As phase teachers [phase meeting – senior / intermediate phase
- As specific subjects [e.g. Social Science / English]. Look into – how do teachers discuss common issues about diversity? [Listen for meetings in special groups, etc. – explore for how often they meet, and copies of minutes of such meeting and handouts as confirmation].
- What kind of policy/ies or curriculum is driving the education system in this era? (What influence did it have on the student and staff composition?)
- What were the implications of these policies and curriculum on the provision of equal opportunities to learn?
- What could be improved in the future to create an enabling environment to provide equal opportunities to learn?

## **Appendix 10: Interview schedule for teachers**

### **Semi-structured interview with teachers**

#### **1. Personal background and Experiences**

- Tell me about yourself, your educational background and work experiences. {probe: what educational qualifications and number of years teaching, what subjects and at which schools}
- Share your experiences about coming to work at your present school? {And how did you come to teach the subjects / class you are teaching?}
- Briefly highlight the status of racial integration at this school?
- Please indicate the racial composition of the class / classes that you teach?
- Kindly tell me about the number of Black African, Coloured, White and Indian learners in your class? (Gender, age, language, religion, culture).
- How would you describe the manner in which the school caters for learners of different cultures, language, religions, socio-economic background and race groups?
- Does the school have cultural days? If yes, how would you describe what happens during that day?
- Have there been racial, cultural or religious incidents at this school?
- Briefly tell me about a policy / programme that the school has to eradicate racism?

#### **1.1 Teaching and learning**

One of the interests of this study is to better understand the teaching and learning strategy you have adopted. It would be useful if you could describe for me your teaching strategy?

- Tell me about how you teach learners from racially diverse backgrounds? Or how you provide them with learning opportunities?
- Share your experiences about the kinds of teaching strategy you use in the classroom? (learner-centred / teacher-centred, etc.) and why?
- What influences your teaching strategy?
- Briefly describe the advantages and disadvantages of your teaching strategy?



- How effective is this teaching strategy in helping learners from diverse racial backgrounds to understand the content of the lessons?
- How do children learn and how do you help them learn?
- How do you search and find relevant information for use in preparing your lesson?

### **1.1.1 Teaching and learning resources**

- What is your opinion about the availability of resources (materials) for the teaching and learning?
- Where do you get the teaching and learning resources?
- Do all learners at school or in your class have access to the learning resources? If yes, how do they use the resources [in the classroom or at school only or are they allowed to take them home?]
- How effective are these material resources in helping learners from diverse racial backgrounds to understand the content of the lessons?
- Tell me about how much time is allocated for the teaching and learning? Why?

## **1.2 Workshops / In-service training (INSET)**

- Do you have opportunities to attend workshops on how to teach racially diverse learners? If yes, how often? [specific dates and what was discussed at each meeting – collect copies of handouts and agenda of three or four recent workshops attended]
- Who organizes the meetings [agency – GDE or NGO's etc.] and for what purposes?
- What do you do with the information when you return from the workshops? [Listen to any sharing or implementation in the classroom].
- Provide one or two example(s) to illustrate the process.
- Do you have opportunities as educators across different phases to discuss issues of racial diversity specifically?
- How would you describe the working relationships among educators in your phase or learning area?

## **Appendix 11: Interview schedule for learners**

### **Semi-structured interviews with learners**

#### **General questions**

- What is your name?
- How old are you?
- Where do you live? With whom do you live (parents, brothers, sisters, etc?)
- What language do you speak at home and what language do you speak at school?
- If you use a different language at school, does this affect your learning in any way?

#### **School Experiences**

- Were you given a choice of which school you would prefer to attend?
  - If yes, why did you choose this school?
- How do you interact with one another at this school?
- Do you have friends from other cultural / racial groups?
- Do you interact with /visit you friends from other racial groups outside the school/classroom?
- Is there anything that discourages you from interacting with other learners from other racial groups?

Tell me about how your interactions with the teacher during teaching and learning?

- Do you have access to all academic programmes and learning resources in your school?
- Do you interact with the materials during the lesson? If yes, how? Give me some examples of this.
- Does the teacher give you an opportunity to voice out your opinions during class discussions? If yes, how are your views being treated during class discussion?

- How do the instructional strategies and the teaching and learning used by the teacher in the class help you understand the content of the subject?
- Do you see yourself and others represented and reflected during classroom instruction? In other words, do you see and understand self and others throughout the lesson?
- Do the pictures on the walls in the classroom illustrate your ethnic, race and culture?
- Who decides on the seating arrangements in class? Are you allowed to form your own groups or does your teacher put you in groups?
- If the teacher places you in groups, how does he / she decide who will be in which group?
- Does your teacher form your groups on the basis of diversity?
- If you form your own groups, how do you decide who will be in your groups / where you sit in class?
- Do you ever discuss issues like gender, race, and cultural, social or religious issues in class?
- If yes, who brings up these issues?
- If the teacher does, does he / she introduce them as part of a lesson?
- If the learners do, what role does the teacher take in a debate or class discussion of these issues?
- Are you able to interact freely with teachers from other racial groups?
- Do you feel you or other learners are discriminated or accepted by other learners from other racial groups?

Do you participate in all activities (sport, cultural activities, Representative Council of Learners (RCL)) that are offered at this school?

- Can anyone from any racial group freely participate in any sport, cultural activities, etc?
- What is the racial composition of the RCL at this school?
- Is there anything that you think can hinder you from participating in any other activities that you like at this school?

## Appendix 12: Classroom observation guide

### Classroom Observation

#### Classroom Observation Guide

- How many learners in the classroom (overall number, boys and girls, their racial groups, etc)?
- How do the seating arrangements of the learners look like? If in groups, how are they formed and how many learners in each group?
  - What relationship exists between classroom arrangements (number of learners, seating arrangements (race, gender)) and the teaching and learning of English / Social Science?
  - How are **classroom dynamics** transformed to accommodate diverse opinions, backgrounds, prior knowledges and to avoid racial groupings?
  - How are the relationships between teacher(s) and learners and between learners themselves during the teaching and learning (e.g., teacher pupil interactions, pupil to pupil interactions: giving explanations, asking learners for points of view, responding to learners' questions or teachers' questions or carrying out classroom tasks)?
  - Where do the interactions begin (e.g., from the teacher to a group of learners or from a group of learners to the teacher)?
- How many teaching / learning resources / materials are there in the classroom (pictures, posters, learners' written activities on the walls, textbooks (where are they placed? Author(s), titles and publishers of any text used)?
- What kinds of resources did the teacher use and how were they used during the teaching and learning?
- How does the teacher introduce English / Social Science lessons?
  - Did the teacher explain the objectives of the lesson?
  - Did the objectives of the lesson correspond with the instructional content and how?

- To what extent is the **policy** and **curriculum** responsive to racially diverse classroom context
- How do teachers adapt **content** to accommodate views that were prior to excluded from the curriculum (learner races, cultures, knowledge, lived contexts, *etc.*)?
- What instructional approaches are teachers employing in order to accommodate racial diversity?
- What kinds of instructional strategies are used for the teaching and learning of English / Social Science? (e.g., visual learning, hands-on learning, collaborative learning, peer tutoring, etc)?
  - In what way are learners exposed to the teaching / learning of English / Social Science?
  - How are learners involved in the English / Social Science activities?
  - What are learners involved in and for how long?
  - What diversity issues emerge from the lesson (English / Social Science)? Or what content of the lesson is being taught to learners in the classroom?
  - Are learners familiar with these diversity issues? And how were they discussed in the lesson?
  - What English / Social Science topics are given more emphasis? And why?
  - How do learners participate? (What kinds of things do learners say (who says what and to who?) and to what extent do learners participate?
  - How are learners' viewpoints treated? Give example
  - What is the role of the teacher in the discussion (e.g., interacting, supervising or uninvolved)?
  - What are learners encouraged to do and not to do?
  - Are learners provided with opportunities to interact with the learning resources and how?
  - Are there times during the lesson when a considerable number of learners seem to be uninvolved or engaged in something else not connected to the classroom task(s)? What are they involved in?

- Do the kinds of teaching and learning resources represent and reflect learners of diverse racial backgrounds?
  - How do learners of diverse racial background see and understand self and others during classroom instruction?
  - Do the pictures on the walls depict the variety of ethnic, racial, and cultural groups?
- How does the teacher assess learners' understanding (test preparations, or class activities such as projects, presentations)?
  - What kinds of activities or test preparations were there? What is their content and focus? How are they used by learners?
  - How much time is allocated to class activities or tests?